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OUTDOOR COMMON BIRDS

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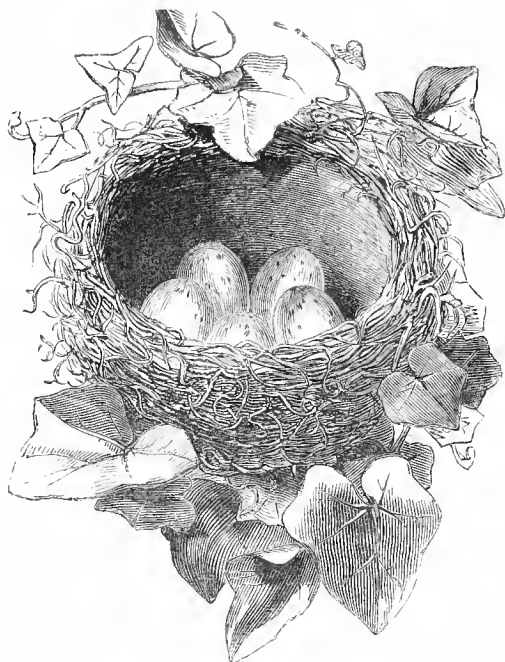
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OUTDOOR
COMMON BIRDS:

Their Habits and General Characteristics.

WITH ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BIRDS AND THEIR EGGS.

BY
HENRY STANNARD.



LONDON AND NEW YORK
FREDERICK WARNE AND CO.

1890.

P R E F A C E.

TO those who make Natural History a study it is known that, although much has been done to explore the numerous paths, habits, and actions of the Animal Creation, still there remains a great and wide field of research, in which are yet to be found hidden treasures of great value.

Ornithology is one of the most pleasing and wonderful studies of the living world ; but it requires the attention of persons of leisure. The only way to attain a right knowledge of the habits and actions of our feathered world is to carefully watch each movement, plumage, and haunt, allowing an impression to be made on the mind of what is seen, and also to retain the season of the year these different things

Preface.

present themselves to view. From my boyhood the study of Nature has been my great delight, and this is the inducement which has caused me to write and illustrate the volume now placed before my readers.

As our feathered tribes will not bear intrusion, a telescope is of great use in aiding us to discern the actions of our wild birds, and through this medium we may come to know much of the wonderful and delightful works of our great Creator.

To my own mind, the theme of my book has been full of interest, amusement, and edification, and I would trust it will prove to be none the less so to all who may give the following pages a careful, generous, and candid perusal.

Should my readers wish to seek for rarer specimens than are to be found in this work on Ornithology, I would refer them to the volumes of Messrs. YARRELL and HEWITSON.

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OUTDOOR COMMON BIRDS.



THE SPARROW HAWK.

(*Accipiter nisus*.)

THE bill is a blue-grey, with strong bristles at the base ; cere eyes ; irides and feet yellow ; claws black ; head flat at the top ; head, wing-coverts, and back lead-colour. At the back of the neck there are a few light feathers coming from over the eyes ; breast

rust-colour barred with brown. Length, twelve inches ; breadth, twenty-four inches. Female : upper parts blackish-brown ; lower parts light, and barred with brown. Length, fifteen inches ; breadth, twenty-eight inches. Eggs light bluish-green, blotched and spotted with red-brown.

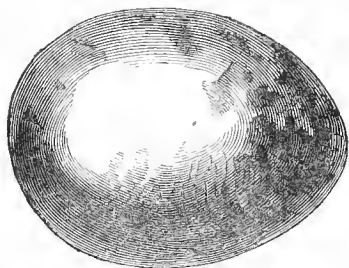
This bird was formerly used for falconry, and afforded that sport with partridges, quails, and pigeons ; while the heron and wild duck were chased by larger species such as the Falcon. The value of a well-trained Hawk was very great ; and in those days it was the most easy as well as amusing way of furnishing the table with game. The Sparrow Hawk is a daring bird, and may be seen, when in search of its prey, skimming up the sides of hedges, flying close to the ground, and taking a short turn through the gap or over a stile. When an object suited to its taste presents itself to view, death is the bird's portion unless it sees the enemy coming and is close to a thicket, and can pop in where the Hawk cares not to follow. It flies with great rapidity, and chases its prey on the wing with a wild and determined flight : it strikes with its talons, scarcely ever making a miss in its aim. When the food is

secured, it carries it off to some naked spot, such as a dead arm of a tree, where it begins to feed by holding the bird in its claws, and tearing it to pieces with its bill. The Sparrow Hawk is to be found in or near woods in the summer-time, but in winter it is to be seen at farm-yards, where there is always a good supply of small birds. At such a place as this, I have seen it as if indulging itself in a choice of food, sitting quite still on a branch and watching its victim below : when it has made its selection, in the twinkling of an eye its wings are thrown open, and the death-warrant of the chosen one is certain—a swoop, a scream—all is over ; and the Sparrow Hawk, amid the twitterings of the outraged flock, suddenly dashes away with its prey struggling in its talons. We have heard of this bird on several occasions being taken by surprise more than once ; the striking of a decoy bird has put it in a very unpleasant position. Again, when making a meal off a partridge, young rabbit, or leveret, the gamekeeper has come across the spot and loosed the charge of his gun, subjecting it to share the fate it has caused many.

The female is larger and bolder than the male, as is mostly the case with predacious birds. She is a very

affectionate mother, and will defend her young at the risk of her own life.

The Sparrow Hawk builds in rocks, high ruins, and in thick firs. The time of nesting is May. The young can be easily tamed when taken from the nest ; but if tricks are played with them by teasing, they soon find their natural spirit. When this bird has young ones it destroys a great number of young partridges, and is the dread of the wild pigeon. It will attack young poultry ; and after one is captured, makes a speedy return for another. This has often been known when fowls have been kept near woods.





THE KESTREL.

(*Falco tinnunculus.*)

THE bill is bluish-grey; cere eyes; and feet yellow; head and neck grey, faintly touched with yellow; the back and wing-coverts are red-brown, marked in several places with black; breast light, marked with short streaks of brown; thighs light; tail grey, barred within half an inch of the end with black, and tipped with white. Length, fifteen inches; breadth, twenty-nine inches. Female browner and more barred.

Length, sixteen inches ; breadth, thirty inches. Eggs rust-colour, spotted with red-brown.

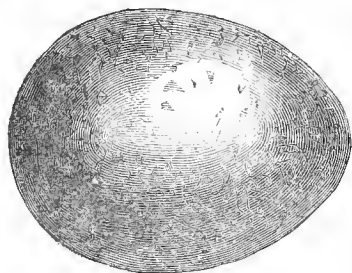
There is a custom existing among gamekeepers of hanging different species of vermin on the lower branches of trees, as trophies of their diligence in their business. One particular tree is generally chosen by those individuals at cross ridings, where you may see the innocent barn owl and Kestrel classed with the notorious sparrow hawk, stoat, and cat. We hope the habits of birds will reach such people as these ; so that if a bird is classed with others of unsuitable behaviour, it may not be put down with the worst of its kind.

This beautiful species of hawk is the most common in Great Britain, and is widely spread throughout all Europe. It is an elegant bird, with flight easy and graceful—wheeling round in half circles and appearing suspended in the air sometimes for a minute together, from which it takes the name of “Windhover.”

It feeds chiefly on beetles, grubs, lizards, and field-mice, falling like a stone upon its victim from one of its hoverings above. Young plantations in the spring of the year, and stubbles in the autumn, are very favourite places for this bird ; here it may be seen,

with its head facing the breeze, standing on the wings of the wind, then descending a short distance, again it is stationary for a second, and then falls direct on its prey. If a mouse has been its object, it will rise in an oblique line to one of its accustomed boughs, where it partakes of its meal: it devours field-mice whole, and afterwards discharges the indigestible parts at the bill in small round balls. This bird can be tamed for falconry, but will only give that sport with small birds, such as larks. The Kestrel builds no nest, but often makes use of another bird's which has remained from the last year, or one forsaken—probably through plunder; it likes the jackdaw's, carrion crow's, or magpie's nest, where the female lays four or five eggs. This bird nests in April, and may be found in decayed trees, high ruins, or rocks. When the young are fledged, it collects a lot of food and places it by them, so that they can help themselves; the parent birds are rarely seen at the place where their charge is in the middle of the day, during the last week of their offspring's confinement, but both at dawn and evening they bring a fresh supply of food. This bird is not feared by the small feathered tribe as the sparrow hawk is; its presence causes but little

alarm, while the sight of the other puts all the birds in an uproar. Persons who study nature may soon see the disposition of birds, whether it be affection or vengeance. The farmer has no need to be afraid of his poultry should a Kestrel make its nest near his house, as is often the case, for these birds differ from other hawks in preferring to bring up their young near the habitation of man; on the contrary, he ought to prize the service of the Windhover for the good it does him in destroying the mice that would otherwise devour his corn.





THE BARN OWL.

(*Strix flammea.*)

THE bill is a light stone-colour ; eyes dark, the circle round each eye is pure white ; and the feathers very smooth ; back, neck, and wing-coverts pale chestnut, very finely speckled with brown-grey and white ; breast white ; plumage to the toes ; tail short, and barred with light red-brown ; wings extend beyond the tail. Length, fourteen inches ; breadth, nearly three feet. The female resembles the male. Eggs white.

Perhaps, of our British birds, the least is known of

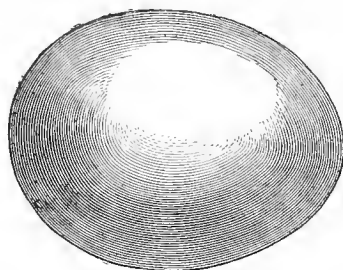
the Owl. Being a bird of nocturnal habits, all its movements are not seen so clearly as those of many others of our feathered visitors. It has been instilled into the heads of past generations, by their ignorant nurses, that the Owl is a bird of bad omen; but let us hope that superstition has done its worst, as, in these days of improvement, things have been more closely noticed, and found different from what had been imagined by our forefathers; and now, we believe, the Barn Owl, instead of being condemned as a thief, will be looked upon as a friend. It has been punished by a bad name long enough; and now, instead of branding it as a robber at our dove-cote, let us believe it to be our friend, and the rat our enemy. He it is that takes the young pigeons and eggs in the night unseen; but the plumage of our friend is discovered through the gloom of shade, and therefore all evil deeds have been put down to it: the rat makes no noise, while the Owl will let every one in the farm-house know its whereabouts by its frequent screams. We feel quite sure, if the deeds of this bird were seen, and generally known, it would be received with welcome; if we could get a true calculation of rats and mice devoured by a pair of these birds and their offspring during twelve months, we

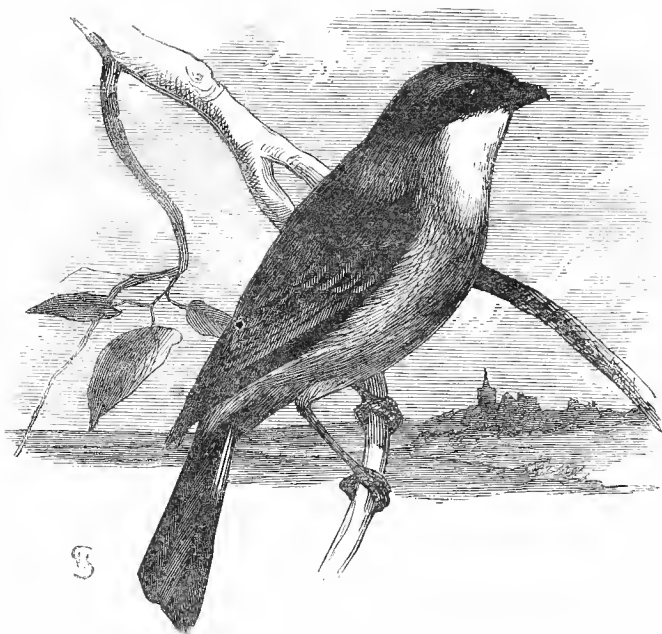
should look twice at the figures, to see if we had not made a mistake in our reckoning.

It is true we have other birds that will kill mice, and cats to do the same business, but none to equal the Barn Owl, especially when it has young. The flight of this light and silent traveller of the night is noiseless; its soft plumage and finely-fringed wings are admirably adapted for its silent journeys: it skims along with great ease; its wings seem rather to fan the air than to bite it; and while on the wing, as well as on its perch, it screams violently, from which it takes the name of "Screech Owl." This bird swallows its food whole, and afterwards rejects the indigestible parts at the bill. If in its resting-place it wishes to perform the duty of rejection, it does not disturb itself, but allows the pellets to remain in the hole (making no other nest) upon which it lays its eggs—four or five in number.

The Barn Owl generally stands and sleeps in an upright position during the light of day; but when it has young, which is in the spring of the year, I have often seen it hawking for its food in the middle part of the day; but at such times I never remember having heard it scream. The cry of the young of this bird is

like a person snoring, and when I was a schoolboy I used to think it was an old bird snoring: this is a common idea with country people. I once saw a Barn Owl capture a mouse within a few yards of me in broad daylight. I noticed it a minute or two before it came very near, through the spaces between the young fir trees which stood around me; at length it hovered in the air, not more than seven or eight yards from me, and descended sideways towards me with its tail spread, and its wings thrown forwards, resting on the ground close round its prey, as if to prevent the escape of the mouse, should it make a mistake in its aim. Since then I have noticed both the Owl and Kestrel doing the same thing when fastening on their prey.





THE RED-BACKED SHRIKE.

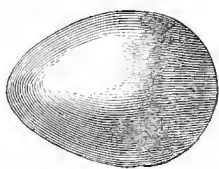
(*Lanius collurio.*)

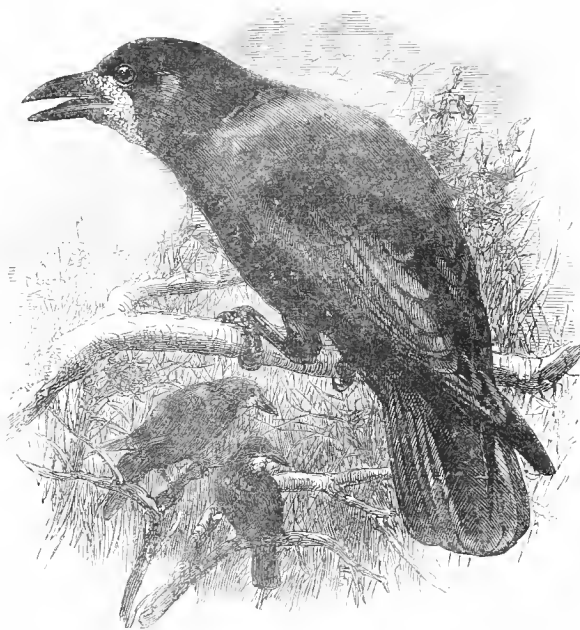
THE top of the head to shoulders and upper tail-coverts grey; bill black and notched near the end; a black mark from the beak to beyond the ear; back and wing-coverts reddish-brown; throat white, passing into faint pink on the breast; wings dark, two middle tail-feathers black; the rest are white at the base. Female: upper plumage reddish-brown, touched at the neck and tail with grey, under parts light on the breast, with a

few bars of dark. Length, seven inches ; breadth, eleven inches. Eggs cream-colour and grey, with a belt of spots light green, brown, and ash-colour.

This bird is a summer visitor to our midland and southern counties, leaving us again early in autumn ; it is a bird of prey, but cannot well be classed with either the hawk or the owl, as its method of catching its food is quite different : both the former species capture their prey with their talons, while the Shrike uses its bill and flies off with its victim in its beak : it feeds on small birds, beetles, and other large insects. It is a great mimic, and will imitate the notes of the hedge-sparrow, robin, or nightingale. It is said to mock these birds for the purpose of drawing them to its haunts so that it can make a more sure prey ; when it has seized its food, it impales it on thorns, tearing away the feathers and skin, eating only the flesh. If this bird is kept in a cage, it will stick its food between the wires before making its meal. In the month of June I have often seen the Shrike perched on the top of some high hawthorn hedge, or on a low naked bough of a tree close to a high boundary, where it can command a good view of the ground below, and from these places it may be seen to fly a short distance ; its flight resem-

bles that of the common wagtail, rising and sinking, leaving a curve downwards from point to point. It rarely goes far from its nest, which it builds within a few feet of the ground in some thicket. It is composed of twigs, moss, and dried grass outside, lined with wool, hair, feathers, and other warm materials. The female lays five or six eggs ; she is a very attentive parent to her offspring, and hatches her brood in June.





THE ROOK.
(*Corvus frugilegus.*)

THE plumage is black, with beautiful reflections of purple and violet ; from the nostrils to the eyes and under the beak, white rough skin ; bill and legs black. Length, eighteen inches ; breadth, three feet. Female like the male. Eggs, pale green, blotched, and spotted with olive and brown.

A rookery is a great pleasure to those who like to watch nature. The gathering of Rooks on the top of

the trees where the remains of their last year's nests are, tells us the spring is again beginning its newness of life, and that, in a short time, we shall see the country abounding with fresh beauties. The most remarkable fact about this bird is its losing the feathers round its bill as far as the eyes from its first moulting. Although its habits of feeding are similar to those of many other birds, it has been supposed by some ornithologists that the constant searching for grubs wears off the feathers ; but it is now conjectured to be the nature of permanent moulting. It feeds on corn, acorns, worms, slugs, beetles, and grubs of all kinds, particularly that which produces the chafer. These birds frequent newly-tilled ground, where they find a good supply of the food they so much like, and if they take a few grains of corn at that time, it is certain the good they do to the farmer, by finding these creatures that have been brought to the surface, fully repays their little pillage, for if the grubs were allowed to remain they would destroy much more grain than the Rook devours. This bird collects a lot of food in its throat for the purpose of feeding its young, not allowing it to pass into the stomach ; the projection made by it may easily be seen, both when on the

ground and on the wing. In early spring it likes to be near the vicinity of man, building on the tops of trees, generally near some town or mansion, where it builds its nest of sticks, tufts of dried grass, lined with roots. It begins to build in February, and lays four or five eggs. The young leave the trees where they were hatched, and go with the parent birds into the fields in search of food ; as summer declines, they are generally accompanied by a number of starlings and jackdaws. In the winter they do not pass their nights in the trees where they were bred, but go in large flocks to some pine forest, where they roost in great numbers. In Woburn Park, the seat of the Duke of Bedford, there is a long line of pines, where thousands of Rooks, accompanied by daws, may be seen to take up their nightly quarters. It is supposed most of the Rooks from counties round find shelter there.

There is an old saying, "The crow smells powder;" and this is often quoted by farmers when they cannot get near enough to shoot one of the flock of Rooks on their newly-sown corn. The scent of the Rook is very keen, but we cannot quite believe they actually smell a charge of powder confined in a gun when fifty yards away ; moreover, if a stick, or anything approach-

ing the appearance of a gun-barrel, be pointed from the shoulder towards them, they are quite as much alarmed, and fly off with frequent caws.

The common idea is, that Rooks while young are only Rooks, but when they fly about the fields in flocks and get their own living, they are Crows ; this, however, is a great mistake, as the Crow and the Rook are quite different birds.





THE JACKDAW

(*Corvus monedula.*)

THE bill is black ; the back of the head and neck grey ; eyes white ; the rest of the plumage is black. Length, thirteen inches ; breadth, twenty-seven inches. The female resembles the male. Eggs light bluish-green, spotted with grey and brown.

The Jackdaw is a common bird in England, and if domesticated, is very amusing ; it is easily tamed, and can be taught to speak distinctly, and will imitate noises it is accustomed to hear. It has a prevailing fancy, like other birds of its kind, to steal and hide things—particularly metals or objects of a bright appearance.

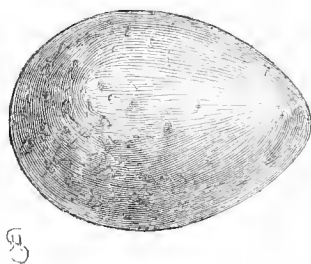
The Daw feeds on the same kind of food as the rook ; it frequents old buildings, towers, and decayed trees, where it may be seen to hop from bough to bough, or stone to stone, with great ease and quickness. If we raise a shrill call, and sound it through the throat as a Jackdaw, it will give the two notes peculiar to this bird.

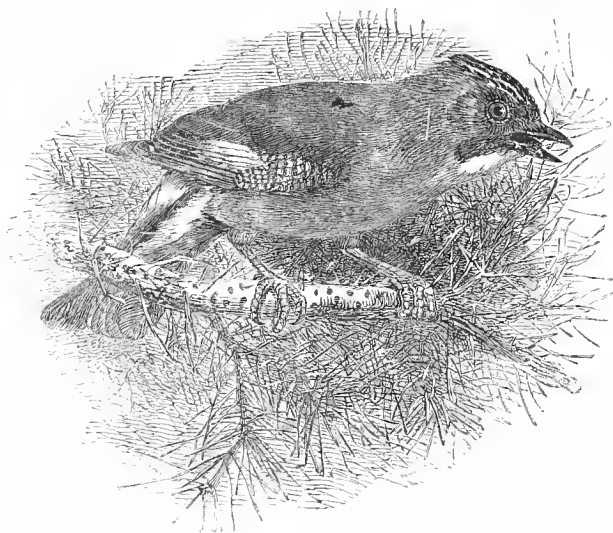
It generally makes its nest in one of the places above mentioned, using a great deal of wood, thereby showing great perseverance but not much judgment ; for, if holding the stick in the middle when going to its nest—which is usually in a hole—it seems not to know that it should take it by the end to accomplish its design, so tries several times in vain, when at last it drops the stick and goes in search of another : it is this bad judgment that causes such a number of broken twigs to be found around and under the place

where the nest is built. We can understand why the rook, magpie, or any other bird that builds on boughs in open air, and requires a strong foundation, should make choice of sticks ; but we cannot see why the Jackdaw should use such a great quantity of wood when a base is often made by the ending of the recess in which it builds ; it is certain it does not there require that support. We have heard of this bird taking a number of sticks, and attempting to build in the chimney of an old ruin, where, as a matter of course, the sticks having no resting-place, all fall to the ground. Such ignorance and stupidity as this is peculiar to the Jackdaw. It lines its nest with warm materials, and lays four or five eggs, which may be found in the month of May.

The Daw likes to be in companies : after the young have left their nest, they join the rooks, and are seen together until the next spring. They roost on the top of high trees after the period of incubation ; and I favour the idea that, after the first pairing of these birds, they do not again disunite, as I have seen a couple building in the same place for two springs—one having some white on its wing, the other a feather showing white in its tail : probably these birds were

hatched in the same nest. How often do we see these birds together in pairs in the winter season with the rook. Like the bird we have last named, it keeps its food in its throat for the purpose of feeding its young, giving it the appearance of having a pouch. Its flight may be known from that of the rook by its wings being shorter and quicker in motion.





THE JAY
(*Corvus glandarius.*)

THE bill is black ; the feathers on the forehead are light, streaked with black ; eyes pale lilac ; throat white, from the corner of the mouth is a decided mark of black ; back of head, neck, and back, reddish-brown ; breast light ; upper tail-coverts white ; wing-lcts and greater coverts barred with black, from which a fine blue takes its place, fading into white, giving a dazzling effect. The quill-feathers are black, marked with white on the outer edges, while those next the

body are chestnut, tipped with black ; legs pale reddish-brown ; tail black.

There can be no mistaking this beautiful bird, as we have no such plumage on any other of our British feathered tribes. The Jay is an amusing bird, and, like the jackdaw—though, perhaps, with more clearness—will speak many words and imitate noises. Even in a wild state it will mimic other birds and animals, such as the bleating of a lamb, the neighing of a horse, the hooting of an owl, the note of a crow, and many others. It is very common in our woods; and, at the least approach of danger, gives repeated sounds of alarm, which are generally answered by others of its species. It is very quick in its sight and actions, and hops from one bough to another with great certainty: if a dog, cat, fox, or any animal of that kind is near the place where it is, it will hop from branch to branch in quick movements, mobbing the creature below. There are many amusing anecdotes told of this bird: one of them I will relate.

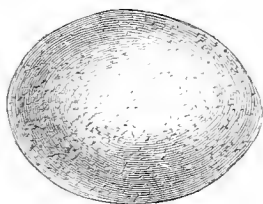
A Jay was kept in an inn-yard, and when a person took in a horse and chaise, it would hop from one perch to another, calling, “Hostler! hostler!” and would continue doing so until he made his appearance.

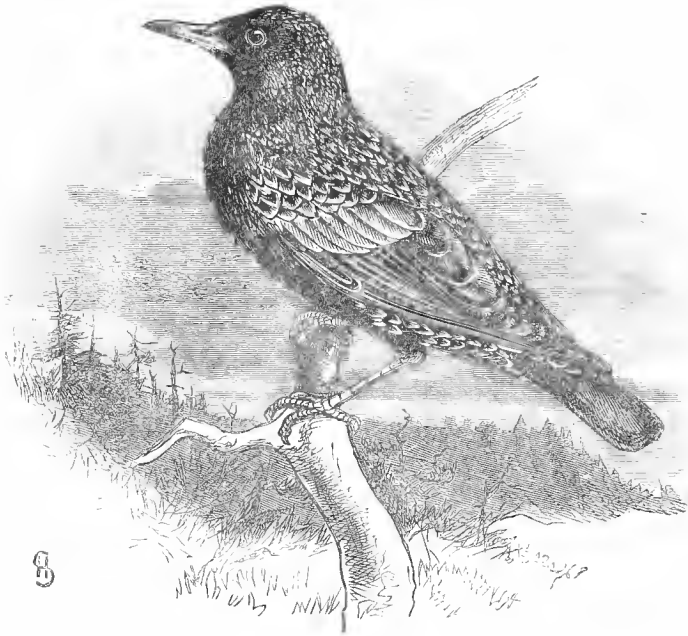
Mr. Bewick tells us of a Jay's accuracy of voice. We will give you the anecdote in his own words :

“A Jay, kept by a person we were acquainted with, at the approach of cattle, had learned to hound a cur dog upon them by whistling and calling him by his name; at last, during a severe frost, the dog was by that means excited to attack a cow, when the poor animal fell on the ice, and was very much hurt. The Jay being complained of as a nuisance, its owner was obliged to destroy it.”

This bird nests in May, and generally in trees not far from the ground, where it can see some bye way used by a few people. It makes its nest of sticks. The female lays five eggs. The young fly with the parent-birds through the winter, and live on acorns, cherries, beans, and peas, of which they are very fond. For the depredations done to these last things, the gardener vows vengeance against them, and many fall from the frequent firing of his gun. This bird has many enemies. The gamekeeper deems it an intruder in his preserves, he therefore traps and shoots all he can; and since ladies have taken to wear the plumes of our most beautiful birds, both the Jay and the kingfisher have afforded a good supply to the

wants of fashion. How delighted is the schoolboy to have in his possession a nest of young Jays! how he flatters himself that he will rear them all, and teach them to chatter! he is sure in his own mind there will be one that will beat Frank's, both in plumage and ability. Such is the idea of the young ornithologist. But, notwithstanding all this, the Jay may still be looked upon as a common bird.





THE STARLING.

(*Sturnus vulgaris.*)

THE bill is yellow ; plumage black, with reflections of purple and green ; upper feathers tipped with buff ; wing-coverts edged and tipped with buff ; feet dirty red. Length, eight inches ; breadth, fifteen inches. The female has more spots on the breast, and the reflections less brilliant. Eggs pale greenish-blue.

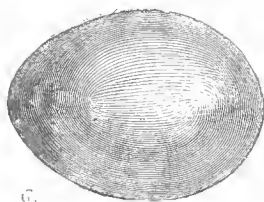
This bird is like the jackdaw in its habits ; it likes company, and is seen in flocks with both the daw and

the rook. It is widely spread over the world. The Starling is a well-known bird, and may be heard chattering in early spring as it sits fluttering its wings on the top of some cottage, or on a tree, where it wishes to make its nest. It builds in April or the beginning of May. Its nest is composed of dried grass, a few feathers, and wool. The female lays from four to six eggs. The young remain in the nest until they are able to take their daily flight with the old birds, and are brown until their first moulting, when they change to the description of plumage given above. They are easily brought up from the nest, and, if kept from hearing other noises, will whistle a short song, which they can be taught by repeating the tune over two or three times early and late in the day. They will also speak words distinctly—even short sentences—and can be taught other amusing accomplishments, without the cruel practice of clipping the tongue. This bird is very affectionate to its young, and if a weasel should find its nest, the parent birds will fight most strongly, darting at the creature with severe pecks. Their diet consists of the worms and insects they find on the ground. Where sheep and oxen are kept, it is a common occurrence to see a

Starling on the head or back of one of these animals, with their irregular movements searching for the food to which it is very partial. At a short distance this bird appears black, but on closer inspection we find the plumage of an old bird most beautiful, holding dark reflections of purple and green, and every feather tipped with buff.

The Starling is rarely seen alone, except in the spring of the year, when the flocks, both small and great, break up into pairs, and its mate is kept at home devoting herself to the nest. They build in rocks, old buildings, roofs of cottages, and hollow trees: though other places may be chosen, these may be said to be their favourite breeding-haunts. In the autumn they go in large flocks—sometimes hundreds are seen together—to their roosting-places; each flock packs with another as they go along, until, their numbers amounting to some thousands, they settle on branches or reeds where they mean to pass the night, breaking down, damaging, and destroying those beds of reeds that are grown in fenny districts, for the purpose of building. As each separate flock arrives, the settled numbers rise and join the fresh visitors, wheeling round their place of retirement and screaming the

whole time. When these birds, assembled in these large numbers, rise through fright, the noise is deafening, and can only be understood by persons who have listened to the sound.





THE BLACKBIRD.

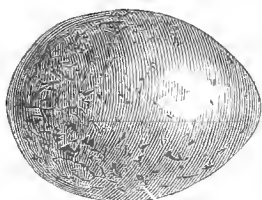
(*Turdus merula.*)

THE bill and orbits of the eyes yellow ; plumage black ; legs and feet black. Female : upper plumage blackish-brown, breast reddish-brown, the bill and legs dusky. Length, ten inches ; breadth, sixteen inches. Eggs greenish-blue, speckled and spotted all over with brown.

This is one of our sweet songsters. Early in the

morning and evening it may be heard in retired places. When taking our country rambles in or near some wood, or when walking near some pond thickly bounded by high hawthorns, the full note of the Blackbird falls on our ear: the song of the female is different to that of the male, not being nearly so good. The male bird during the first year resembles the female in plumage, but the following spring he is in his best clothes. This is a solitary bird, never going in flocks; it frequents woods, bushes, and thick hedgerows, selecting a spot in one of these places for its nest. In early spring, plantations of holly, young pines, and firs are very favourite places for the first brood. Its nest is made of mud and rough grass, lined with fine dried grass; the distance from the ground is generally only a few feet. The usual number of eggs laid by this bird is four or five. The young remain in the nest until they are fledged. The Blackbird feeds on worms, grubs, and insects, and is very partial to ripe cherries and gooseberries; at the time of the year when these fruits are ripe it is a great glutton; in the winter, when snow is on the ground, if a few apples are allowed to remain under some evergreens, this bird will be sure to find them, and will peck the

middle out, leaving only the shell, be the apple ever so sour ; at this season it will also feed on haws and holly-berries. It is a shy bird, and difficult of access, being more timid, than suspicious of danger, and when on the wing, if disturbed from a hedgerow, flies close to the ground. In the spring of the year it cannot bear the sight of an owl, stoat, or cat, and if either of these be near its nest, it will use a volley of notes peculiar to itself, which is always sounded when it is frightened. On such an occasion as this, the Blackbird is very courageous, and will place itself between the enemy and its offspring, dashing in its face with a wild flight and cry of alarm, generally causing the intruder to beat a retreat. These birds are often kept in a cage, and will learn a tune from a flute very correctly. Their vocal powers are perhaps better when educated than in a wild state, as cultivation does away with the natural breakings out of noisy tones.





THE FIELDFARE.

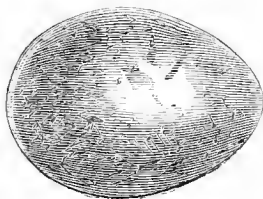
(*Turdus pilaris.*)

THE bill is yellowish ; eyes brown ; the top of the head, neck, and upper tail-coverts, grey ; back and covert of wings reddish-brown ; quill-feathers and tail dark brown ; legs dusky yellow ; claws dark. The throat and breast are a fine yellow, marked with black ; lower parts white. Length, ten inches ; breadth, seventeen inches. Female very much like the male. Eggs bluish-brown, marked with brown spots.

The plumage of this bird differs very much, some

being more yellow than grey on the head, neck, and upper tail-coverts, and others more brown; on the breast the marks of some are so faint and indistinct that it is almost impossible to tell the form of them. There is a divided opinion between ornithologists as to the fact of this bird having any song; Toussend doubts the powers of its voice, while Yarrell says "it is soft and melodious." Its call-note is very powerful; it is harsh and short, and is uttered just as it takes its flight, and while on the wing. This bird is migratory, and visits us about October, leaving again in the month of March or the beginning of April. Should the winter be very severe about Christmas-time, it will leave us for more southern countries, paying us another visit in the spring, on its return to Russia, Sweden, and Norway, where it builds in companies. The Fieldfare is a very sociable bird, going always in flocks after the young are fledged; they roost together, their journeys are accomplished in large numbers, and they generally fall in numbers by the gun. Two or three hundred nests are to be seen within a small space in a forest where they wish to rear their young. They build in trees, and compose their nest of dried grass and mud, lined with a thick bed of fine dried grass; the usual number

of eggs is four or five. The Fieldfare is very common with us in winter : if the weather be mild, it resorts to damp pastures, newly-manured ground, and marshy land, where it feeds on worms and grubs ; but if frosty and the ground covered with snow, it takes to haw-bushes and holly trees, soon making the fruits of these vanish, before the severity of winter has long set in. Fieldfares are very fat and nice eating, and, at such places as I have last described, afford good sport to young sportsmen, as several can be shot at once. They are not easily frightened, for they will return to the same place where, perhaps only a few minutes ago, there has been a line cut through their numbers with a charge of shot : this is the only time in England they give such an opportunity of being taken. These birds go about the country in flocks, rarely losing sight of each other ; and when one of their number sees danger, it gives the alarm, and the whole lot pack together, and generally fly to some distance before alighting again, which will be on the top of a tree — they prefer the ash to any other tree.





THE SONG THRUSH.

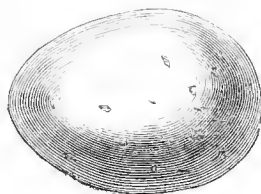
(*Turdus musicus*.)

THE bill is brown; the upper plumage brown; throat white; breast light, and spotted with brown; legs yellow; claws light brown. Length, eight and a half inches; breadth, thirteen inches. The female resembles the male. Eggs blue, with a few dark spots, most of which are at the larger end.

This bird is a beautiful songster, and sings with great sweetness and verity of tune; it cheers us from early spring to the latter end of summer with its musical voice;

and children declare it says several words in its song, such as "Jane! Jane!" "A little game, a little game, a little game," "Please, please," "Sweet Jenny, sweet Jenny, sweet Jenny;" indeed, one might fancy it did, although I am not going to certify the truth of the statement. This is one of our best songsters, and remains with us the year round, sharing the severity of winter and the heat of summer with us, doing a great deal of good, and no other harm than taking a little fruit, which of course he deserves, and cannot ask a better thing in return for his sweet notes; he never seems to be singing too close; there is something in his tone so very soft and harmonious, that we could listen to him by the hour, and be pleased to give him a taste of our currants and gooseberries, or any other fruit of our garden, to refresh or clear his trembling throat, and make, if possible, his song more sweet. The Thrush often builds its nest in evergreens, or in our garden hedge; but is more often found in woods, hedges, young plantations of pines and firs; it builds its first nest in March or April, sometimes it can be found in February; its nest consists of dried grass, roots, and other materials, strongly matted together with earth and clay, and is lined with smashed decayed wood,

stuck together with clay and excrement of cows; when the nest is quite dry and hard the female lays five eggs. This bird is not considered migratory, although seen in flocks in the autumn. It feeds on worms, slugs, and snails, and fruits of various kinds; in the winter, when the weather is severe, and all around is white with snow, it pays frequent visits to the hawthorn for support. It is amusing to see the Thrush take a snail and manage to feed on the inside by breaking the shell; at first it looks at it very curiously, as if to satisfy itself the shell contains a good inside (as depicted in the illustration): this is done about the distance of one hop from it; when it has made its peck to secure the object, it flies or hops with it in its beak to some stone it has chosen, and breaks the shell against it, by holding it and beating it several times upon the hard surface; when this is accomplished, it pecks the snail from its former home, and goes in search of another. The Thrush often prefers one stone in particular for this purpose.





THE REDWING.

(*Turdus iliacus*.)

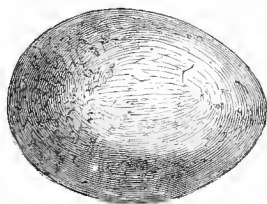
THE bill is brown ; the eyes hazel, above the eyes is a white streak ; the upper plumage brown, lower plumage white, spotted with dusky brown ; feet brownish-grey. Length, eight inches ; breadth, thirteen inches. Female like the male. Eggs greenish, spotted with brown.

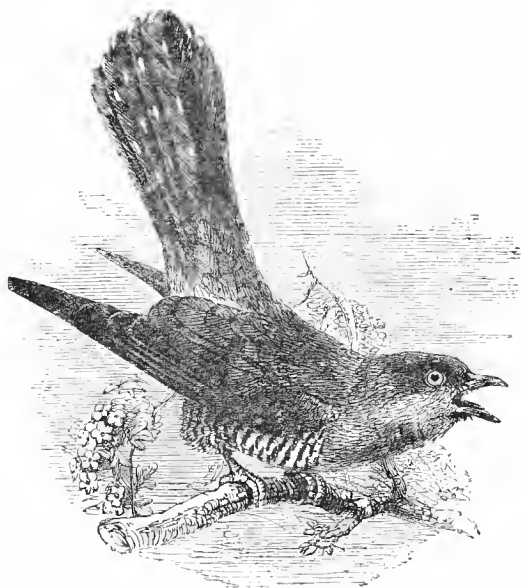
This bird is migratory. It visits us from Norway, and other northern countries, arriving in England about the same time as the fieldfare ; it frequents the

same places, and partakes of the same kind of food; they are often seen together, both when on the ground and when feeding on the haw or holly-berries; and, like the fieldfare, it leaves us in the spring of the year in large flocks for its northern journeys. The female lays five eggs in a nest placed in some low bush or hedge, soon after its return to Norway. It is called the "Nightingale;" its notes are very clear and musical, though wild. We are told it generally sits perched on the top of some high tree, where it favours its hearers with its song.

The Redwing is a delicate bird, and cannot endure very severe weather; for when the ground is hard with frost, and snow has been seen for some time past on every branch, it may be often picked up dead or dying through the cold and want of sufficient nourishment. They are shy birds during open weather, but when the winter begins to show itself, they may be shot in great numbers. The first fall of snow is the best time to get a dozen or two for the table, as they are then very fat and in good condition, and can be bagged without much trouble. We read that the Romans held them in such great esteem as to keep thousands in an aviary, and fed them with a paste

composed of bruised figs, flour, and other eatables of a fattening property, to improve the delicacy and flavour of their flesh. These aviaries were made with very little light, just sufficient to show their food—every object around being obscured: there was nothing present to remind them of their past liberty. Upon this treatment these birds fattened, to the great profit of their owners, who sold them to epicures for two shillings each. The flavour of the Redwing when very fat is considered finer than that of the quail or woodcock.





THE CUCKOO.

(*Cuculus canorus.*)

THE bill is black ; the inside of the mouth red ; eyes yellow ; upper plumage slate-colour ; the breast and lower parts white, elegantly barred with blackish-brown ; the tail long ; the two middle feathers are dark, tipped with light ; the under ones are not so dark, and are marked with alternate spots of white ; legs short and yellow. Length, thirteen inches ; breadth, twenty-four inches. The female resembles

the male. The eggs are dull white, spotted all over with a greyish-brown.

This bird was a prize to the naturalist when he had discovered its migratory nature ; until then it was a great puzzle, for many rumours had been set about as regards its having metamorphosing powers. At one time it was believed to be a hawk part of the year, and a Cuckoo the other ; and not a century ago, it was considered to lie torpid in some hole during winter. But now we know that it does not change, but leaves us at the approach of autumn, to go where it will find an atmosphere suited to its nature, and where it can still feed on the particular food fitted to its slight frame. Any one seeing this bird might feel surprised at knowing it weighs only three ounces and a half.

Everybody knows the name of "Cuckoo," for we are told of this bird by our nurses as soon as we can understand the meaning of words. The name is familiar enough, and yet how many of our country rambles go here and there hearing the well-known sound, and, at the same time, have not the least knowledge of the size or shape of this bird, but suppose they shall see it some day, instead of following the

direction from whence the notes spring. It is generally thought by those who do not know it to be a small bird ; on the contrary, it is a bird measuring in width twenty-four inches : by such people as these, it is often taken for a hawk. It is a solitary bird, in the strict sense of the word—never going about in flocks, neither does it pair. It frequents woods, hedges, and plantations for the purpose of finding food : on its first arrival here, it feeds on beetles and other insects ; but when caterpillars are plentiful, it prefers them, especially the hairy ones.

This bird that is looked upon with such welcome never makes any nest, nor does much, if anything, towards the maintenance of its young. The female lays one egg in another bird's nest—generally that of the hedge sparrow, titlark, yellow ammer, redstart, whitethroat, linnet, greenfinch, chaffinch, wren, or wagtail : of these it prefers the hedge sparrow's to any other. When the young Cuckoo is hatched—should there be an infant brood in the same nest—it begins as soon as it has strength to get the young one on its back, and then raises it to the top of the nest, where it topples the poor little unfortunate rightful owner over. Should there be more than one young hedge

sparrow in the home, they all share the same fate. This accomplished, the Cuckoo takes full possession of the nest, leaving the baby birds to perish on the ground.

The number of eggs laid by the Cuckoo is not known, as it deposits but one egg in a nest, which is believed to be "laid on the ground," and carried by the bird in its mouth to some nest chosen for the purpose : it has been known to be found in such nests as the wren's. A friend of mine found an egg in a reed-warbler's nest, where it would be quite impossible for this bird to enter and accomplish its design. The conveying of the egg could be easily contrived, as the gape of the Cuckoo is quite large enough for that purpose without injury to the egg. Of all our common British birds, we have not another that lays such a small egg when compared with the size of the bird. This Nature has wisely ordained ; for if the egg of the Cuckoo were much larger, most probably it would be noticed by the small bird, and cause it to forsake its nest ; or, if not, the heat of the hedge sparrow might not be sufficient to hatch it, even if it wished to do so.

Such, then, is the nature of the Cuckoo ; and, on account of its two notes, which are so well known by

everybody, it is received with welcome as the harbinger of spring—while the small willow-wren has been proclaiming the same thing in a much sweeter way for more than a week previous, close to our very doors, and doing much good in taking away the blight from our apple-bloom and other fruit trees ; and yet most of us have never thanked him for coming over the sea to welcome with us the first appearance of spring.





THE NUTHATCH.

(*Sitta Europæa.*)

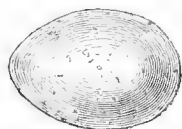
THE upper plumage bluish-grey ; the cheeks and throat light ; a black mark crosses the eyes ; breast and under parts of the body pale orange ; tail short, the two middle feathers are slate-colour, the rest dark brown, spotted with white near the base ; legs pale yellow ; claws large and very much bent. The female resembles the male. Eggs white, spotted with purplish-red and brown.

As I was sitting one fine autumn day with my sketch-book on my knee, my attention was drawn to the movements of a Nuthatch as it came down a thick nut-stem head-foremost with a nut in its beak, apparently looking for a crevice in the wood in which to put the nut; at last, having found a crack in the bark, it stood with its head back and gave a sharp peck, throwing all the strength of its little frame into the blow: the nut-shell came apart, and the bird picked up the kernel and flew away with it into the wood. Another time, I was watching a Nuthatch in the month of October near an orchard, and saw this bird with a filbert in its beak. I kept my standing against the trunk of a tree, and saw it go to the bottom of another tree close by, soon after flying away in the same direction as it came without anything in its beak. My curiosity was excited, and I went to the place from which the Nuthatch flew; there I found a tuft of grass beaten down by the frequent settling of this bird, and, on further inspection, I found a small hole under a large root; I took a stick and forked away the mould, when, just under the surface, I found more than a pottle of these sweet nuts already shelled. I have no doubt they were put there for the purpose

of affording a banquet when no more could be found on the filbert-stems.

The Nuthatch is a solitary bird ; but, nevertheless, it is very common in our woods and orchards, and persons wishing to see it in a country stroll have only to keep an attentive ear for a quick-repeated short note, like two flint stones being knocked together, or if a sound of frequent tapping on a decayed arm of a tree fall on their ear, they have only to look in the direction from whence the sound comes, and they will see this bird clinging to the bough in any position it may choose, hammering with its bill in fast action. The motion of the Nuthatch on trees gives it the appearance of sliding in short spaces round the branches, instead of taking steps, and playing the game of peep-bo. When on the ground in search of beech-nuts, it hops in a straight, short, decided manner, and when it has found a nut, will generally fly to the base of another tree, and place the beech-seed in one of the rough pieces of bark if such a tree as an oak or an elm is near ; should all the trees around be beech, it will secure it in one of the folds where the strong roots rise from, generally seen in these trees, and eat the kernel there.

This bird nests in the month of April or May, laying from four to six eggs in a nest composed of grass, leaves, and other rough materials, and is mostly found in a crack of a tree. If the opening is too large to please its fancy, it gets some clay and plasters it round, so as to leave only just sufficient room to get in and out.





THE TREE-CREEPER.

(*Certhia familiaris*.)

THE bill is long and curved ; the eyes hazel, over each eye is a line of pale yellowish-white ; the upper plumage is mottled with yellowish-brown, white and brown ; the breast light ; wing-coverts marked with buff ; tail-feathers reddish-brown. Length, five inches ; breadth, seven inches. The female is like the male. Eggs white, with red spots.

This bird is only seen on trees, posts, and walls,

never settling on the ground: orchards are very favourite places for these birds. In the spring of the year there you may see them creeping up the trunks or arms of the rough wood in a winding manner, stopping here and there to clear small insects off the outside. The Tree-creeper cannot rap as the nuthatch does to frighten its food, and by that means make it start from its lurking-place, or peck away the wood where there may be a concealed worm, as its bill is not strong enough to enable it to do so. The windings round the bodies and arms of trees are performed with great ease; and it is very amusing to see it come in sight a little farther up the stem, when only a few seconds ago it vanished some feet lower down. Its climbing is just the same whether the way lies in an oblique, perpendicular, or horizontal line; it is quite indifferent whether it climbs sideways, or hangs with its back downwards, or travels with its tail towards the ground. Arrived at last to the smaller parts of the tree, where it is not likely to find any more support, it takes a short flight, generally alighting within a foot or two of the ground at the base of another tree, where it begins a new search for its sustenance. The tail of this bird is well made to help its progress; the feathers being

very strong and wiry, aid greatly in steadying its movements.

The Tree-creeper does not show much fear at the presence of man ; if he is a few yards on one side, it may keep more on the other side, taking frequent peeps at him, and if alarmed, will only fly to another tree or some other object close by. I have found this bird's nest in May ; it builds in small holes of trees ; pollard trees may be said to be very favourite places, or the spaces between very rough bark. Another favourite spot is where the bark has been split and separated from the body of the tree by lightning, leaving a vacancy between that and the wood. Its nest is composed of twigs, small pieces of bark, and other coarse materials, lined with wool and other warm substances. The number of eggs laid by this bird varies from five to nine. The Tree-creeper is a solitary bird, and is but rarely seen with others of its kind, except in the spring, and even then it is more often seen singly performing its creeping, which it does from morning until night.





THE HAWFINCH.

(*Coccothraustes vulgaris*.)

THE bill is horn-colour ; the throat and plumage round the bill black ; the top of the head and cheeks reddish-brown ; the back of neck ash-grey ; back dark reddish-brown ; larger wing-coverts white ; wings black ; under parts grey, brown, red ; tail short and black, tipped with light. Length, seven inches. The female much less colour than the male. Eggs greenish, streaked and spotted with grey.

This bird is likewise called the "Grosbeak." It was

considered migratory only a few years since ; but the truth of its remaining with us is a positive fact. I have seen as many as thirteen of these birds together in the winter, frightened from the firing of a gun close by some hornbean trees, the seeds of which they are very fond of ; their bill is admirably adapted for separating the different shells that contain the variety of kernels they so much like. Cherry, haw, seeds fallen from the cones of the spruce fir, hornbean-seeds, beech-nuts, and many more, are the favourite food of this bird : be the shell ever so hard, it soon gives way under the strong clippers belonging to the bird. In summer, when green peas are ready for the table, I have seen as many as seven all helping themselves at no great distance from each other ; and there can be no mistaking that somebody has paid an interested visit to the garden, and left a proof of having enjoyed green peas before being cooked, quite as much as one who has them served up with roast duck or lamb.

This bird flies rather high, using a short shrill note frequently while on the wing. It builds its nest in the month of May or June, laying five or six eggs in a nest composed of twigs, lichen, and roots, lined with finer materials. The male bird has a very uncommon ap-

pearance, being richly coloured : the chubbiness of its make, the size of its bill, and the four outer quill-feathers, bearing the appearance of having been clipped at the end by some sharp instrument—all adds to the singular appearance it bears.





THE GREENFINCH

(*Coccothraustes chloris*.)

THE bill is a pale reddish-brown , the eyes dark ; the top of the head, neck, back, and wing-coverts brownish-green ; quill-feathers dark ; the two middle feathers of the tail dark, the rest dark at the top and yellow at the base ; from the throat to the thighs the green fades into yellow ; legs light reddish-brown ; claws white. Length, six inches. Eggs white, marked with purple and brown.

The Greenfinch is a handsome bird, but its song is not nearly so sweet as either the chaffinch or goldfinch, being rather harsh and not so musical. Any one wishing to see the bird, has only to walk out on a sunny day in summer near some evergreens, and listen for a note pronounced as "twe-e-e," or another favourite sound like "pee-wit," coming from the lower branches of trees, or standing in or near a shrubbery, or close to some thick blackberry-bush running over the top of the hedge.

This bird is known by several names, as "Green Finch," "Green Linnet," and "Green Grosbeak." Its bill is not nearly so strong as the hawfinch's, but quite as useful in crushing grain as the other is for splitting cherry-stones. The Greenfinch, in feeding, takes a grain of barley, or any other grain suited to its taste, husking and milling it before allowing it to pass into its crop. In winter these birds may be seen in large flocks, feeding on various kinds of seeds found in short stubbles. These numbers may also be frequently found where a rick of corn may have been recently removed, picking up some of the lost grain; if they are disturbed and a tree is near, they will most likely settle upon it.

The structure of this bird's nest is good, and is very

artistic. The outside is not so compact and close as the chaffinch's, doing away with the level appearance so common to that bird's, the framework being composed of light twigs and roots, bound to the middle part of the nest with wool, intertwined with moss and lined with hair. The female lays five eggs: I have seen six, but five is more often the number. If it is kept in a cage and allowed to hear the song of another bird, it will often imitate it, and, by that means, do away in part with its harsh sounds. It is a great eater, and if permitted to be in company with other feathered friends, is generally allowed the first choice of the seed-box on account of its strong beak. The greenfinch may be easily taught to fly and settle on the finger that supplies its daily wants, and then it may be seen to crush a grain of barley with an air of great pleasure.





THE BULLFINCH.

(*Pyrrhula vulgaris*.)

THE bill is dusky ; the eyes black ; the top of the head, throat, and plumage round the bill, black ; back grey ; cheeks, breast, and flanks, red ; the upper tail-coverts white ; wings and tail purple-black ; the band of feathers that cross the wings are buff. Length, six and a quarter inches. The female is less brilliant than the male in colour. Eggs light green, spotted with red, brown, and purple.

The note of this bird in a wild state is very singular, and can be imitated in a low, short, harsh whistle ;

but when kept in captivity, seems pleased to devote itself to education. It can be taught to pipe different tunes beautifully, and sound the chiming of church bells; but for this to be accomplished the Bullfinch must be taken when young from the nest, before it has time to learn the note of its parent. Mr. Bewick tells us "there are instances of two Bullfinches having been taught to sing in parts." In Germany there are schools on purpose for these birds, where they are taught in classes, and, according to their ability, they attain different tunes; some birds are only able to learn one air well, while another will repeat two or three perfectly, and if the piece is played differently to what it has been taught, it will show great displeasure by hissing at the person then playing. Good piping Bullfinches are very valuable, some being worth four or five guineas.

This bird is common in all parts of our island, and, in a wild state, is very destructive in the spring to the buds that contain the blossom of different fruits, especially stone fruit, such as plums and cherries. It has been said these birds go for a "small maggot," but whether there is a small maggot in some of the buds or not is best known to the eater of the blossom

— it is very positive the Bullfinch does not leave us a chance to see, after it has inserted its strong bill into it. I have known trees perfectly stripped of bloom by these birds, leaving a strong proof of the damage done, on the ground below, the proof being buds, scales, and fragments of flowers. They are very partial to ripe raspberries in summer, and I have no doubt they find them very refreshing. In the autumn and winter they feed on seeds, such as the frost-bitten blackberry, herbs of various kinds, the ash, and many more seeds, which they find either on the ground or still hanging on their stems. At this time of the year they go in small flocks or pairs, and when disturbed, fly off singly, one taking the lead, the others following individually, until all have left the place where only a few seconds before they were perhaps partaking of a meal : if this occurs on a hedge, it is often repeated in short distances for a long way down the side, until they either come to another hedge or settle on the boughs of a tree. They are more often seen on the ash than on any other : if this tree stands in the hedgerow, they are almost sure not to pass it ; but if disturbed here, they will often fly over the intruder's head to the place where they first started.

This bird nests in May, and generally builds in some evergreens. Its nest consists of sticks and roots, the latter forming a lining. The eggs laid are four or five in number. The parent birds are very affectionate to their nestlings, and the latter remain with the old birds longer than most of our feathered creation do.



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THE COMMON BUNTING.

(*Emberiza miliaria.*)

THE upper plumage is of a yellowish-brown ; each feather down the back is marked in the middle with blackish-brown ; the throat is white ; the under plumage dirty yellowish-white, streaked on the breast, the marks lengthening as they go downwards. Length, seven and a half inches. The female resembles the male. Eggs light dirty white, streaked and spotted with grey and brown-purple.

Its name has been given it perhaps on account of its being so widely spread over Europe. It is also found in Asia Minor, the islands of the Mediterranean, and in the north of Africa, where, it appears, the inhabitants look upon its numbers as an article of food; and in many countries where small birds are made use of for the table, being considered good eating, the Common Bunting is fattened for that purpose; but with those who prefer large joints, they are considered too insignificant to form any part of their repast.

The yellow ammer, or yellow bunting, is much oftener seen in England than the Common Bunting. The latter is more numerous in winter than in summer, on account of its numbers being added to by a supply from the North in the winter season.

This bird builds its nest among thick grass or stubby bushes, in sedge a foot or two above the ground; it is constructed of tufts of grass, roots, moss, and hay, lined with hair and a little wool. The nest generally contains four or five eggs. While the female bird is performing the duty of incubation, her mate pays her frequent visits, bringing her food, and is in every way most attentive. He will sit on a twig of the bush, or on a sprig near his partner, and sing his simple song,

which is harsh, and not very musical : it is composed of a frequent repetition of one note, ending with a longer one in a lower tone. When it rises to fly, it allows its legs to hang down, giving any one who did not know the bird the idea that its legs were injured. This bird is also called the Corn Bunting, through its having a peculiar liking for that seed. In the winter it feeds in flocks, and frequents the same ground as the skylark.





THE YELLOW AMMER.

(*Emberiza citrinella*.)

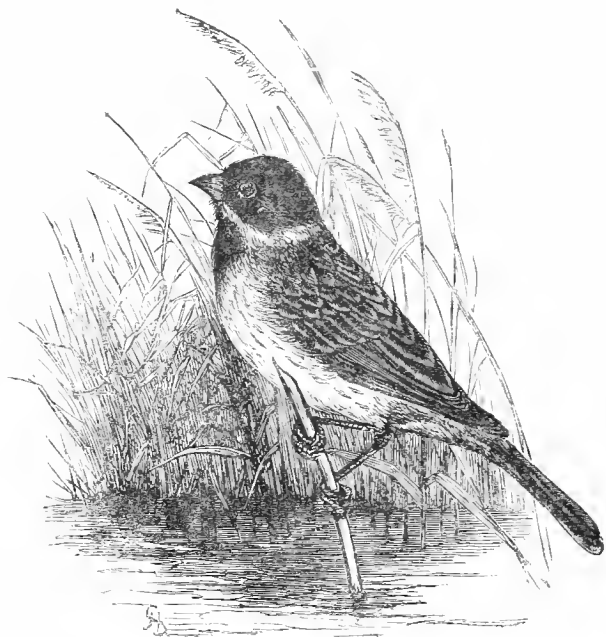
THE bill is dusky ; the eyes brown ; the top of the head bright yellow, marked with brown ; the cheeks, throat, and under parts pure yellow ; the breast inclines to red, and marked with reddish-brown ; the sides are streaked with the same colour ; the upper plumage is a greenish-brown ; tail dusky, and slightly forked ; legs yellowish-brown. Length, six inches and a quarter. In the female the yellow parts are less vivid. Eggs pale pinkish-brown, marked with purple-brown scribbles and a few spots.

In the summer, when the weather is hot, wherever there is a lane bounded by furze-bushes, or an old hedge of short height and long standing, time having made some little impression upon it, this bird may be seen with its bright yellow breast, giving, as it were, a beauty-spot to the scenery around, perched on the top of a hedge-stake, or on the summit of a dead stick projecting from the hedgerow higher than another. And as the traveller goes along the dusty road, this bird flits before him with a dipping flight, settling again on the top of the hedge and sounding its short note, allowing the pedestrian to come within a few yards, when off he goes again, and performs the same movement he did before; this is done two or three times, when perhaps thinking he has gone far enough away from his selected dwelling-place, he flies back sometimes over the observer's head, uttering his simple note, and again alighting near the place from where he was first started. At this time of the year, in the afternoon, when most of our feathered songsters have bid adieu to their vocal powers for the season, perhaps thinking they shall have quite enough to do to find food for their young and keep a sharp look-out for winter, this bird seems to enjoy a little song to itself, which con-

sists of several notes repeated rapidly, and ending with two longer ones : country people say it says, "A little bit of bread and no cheese." In winter these birds collect together in large flocks, and they have no objection to the company of any other kind of birds that feed on the same sort of food as themselves. At a rick-yard, when the weather is very severe, several kinds of birds may be seen together—yellow ammers and different kinds of finches. The hedge sparrow always seems afraid of so many birds, and keeps in the background until it sees something it would very much like, then hops quickly, pecks up the thing it wants, and either returns with fast hops or flies back to its retired spot : should a stray yellow ammer chance to fly over and see these numbers, it will be almost sure to descend, and if so, it will be with a remarkably quick downward flight, to settle on a tree close by, if there should be one, before joining the party below ; and when alighted, will utter its plaintive note, at the same time jerking its tail and opening the tail-feathers. When this bird is alarmed, it will generally only fly to some neighbouring tree or hedge near the spot where it is feeding. They feed on various kinds of food ; but at this time of the year prefer corn and other

seeds. They build in June ; and their nest is made very simply, and is composed of dried grass outside, with a few roots and moss, lined with hair and wool. The female lays four or five eggs ; she is very attentive to her young, and often makes more than one nest in the year. The eggs of this bird have the appearance of having been scribbled on with a free and easy hand : some few marks are bolder than others.





THE BLACK-HEADED BUNTING.

(*Emberiza sahæniclus.*)

THE head and fore part of the neck and breast are black, which is divided by a white line from the beak, continuing round the black on the head; the back and wing-coverts are a reddish-brown, each feather being marked in the middle with blackish-brown; the under parts are white, streaked on the sides with light brown; the upper tail-coverts are grey mixed with brown; tail dusky, two middle feathers black with

pale brown edges, the outer quill-feathers are white tipped with brown; legs and feet dusky. Length, six inches. Female, head and throat reddish-brown, inclining to black; the white not so pure as on the male. Length, six inches. Eggs brown-grey marked with purplish-brown.

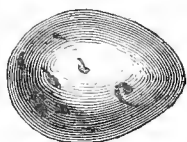
This bird has several names, all of which are very characteristic of the bird: Black-headed Bunting, Reed Bunting, and Reed Sparrow. Wherever there is water, or marshy ground with beds of bulrushes round large pieces of water, this bird may be seen perched on some stick or broken reed projecting above the water, from which it takes its flight, which extends to no great distance and not far from the ground, or if crossing a lake or any extent of water, it will flit a few feet over the surface, and again alighting on some stunted bush or rush often seen by the sides of these places, it generally settles itself with a jerk of the tail and spreading of the tail-feathers, at the same time uttering its simple note, which resembles the yellow ammer's or the common bunting's. The Black-headed Bunting builds in the places already described, and composes its nest of dried grass, lined with hair and the soft down of rushes, wherein is deposited four

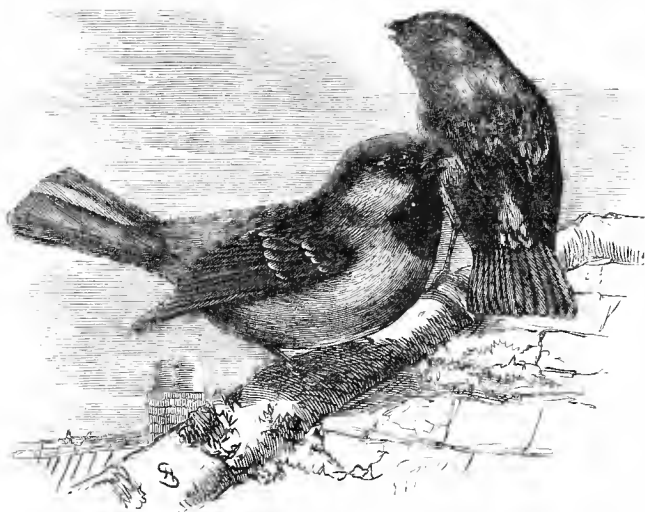
or five eggs. The nest is generally placed between three or four strong rushes about the distance of three feet from the water, and shows great art in building and in securing its home to them. At this time of the year the male is very attentive to his mate, and when she is kept in the nest by the laws of nature, he will perch himself close by, charming her with his little song.

In the month of November I have seen these birds, in some places, about twenty or thirty together, in a newly-planted cover, busily employed selecting different seeds from the strong weeds grown there ; and when disturbed from such places, they generally leave by only a few of their number at once, the rest following the direction of the first, seemingly in turns. In the winter, if the weather is rather open, these birds will still continue to inhabit their favourite haunts, but if very severe weather sets in, they join other birds in rick-yards, finding support at the stacks of corn. They will at these times allow a person to approach nearer to them than at any other ; this, however, may be through the want of more congenial weather, as they do not seem to be able to stand the cold so well as many others of our little feathered tribes. In the summer

the Black-headed Bunting rarely forsakes the vicinity of water, where it finds all it wants.

This bird is common in England throughout the year, but in Scotland and Ireland it migrates southwards at the approach of winter.





THE HOUSE SPARROW.

(*Passer domesticus*.)

THE bill is dusky; the top of head and back of neck bluish-ash; the throat, fore part of neck, and between the eyes and beak, black; a few light feathers are seen from the corner of the eyes; cheeks whitish; the breast and under parts pale brown-grey; the back and wing-coverts reddish-brown, each feather being marked darker in the middle, the wing-coverts being tipped with white, forming a bar across the wing; the quill-feathers are dusky with reddish edges; tail-coverts grey-brown edged with light colour; legs

pale brown. The female differs from the male, wanting the black near the beak, and having a light line over each eye. Eggs faint grey-white, spotted with dark grey and brown.

We have no bird that will follow man like the House Sparrow—it seems to possess a strong desire to dwell with him. In our country walks we see it; when in sea-ports, towns, and cities, we have the pleasure of both seeing this bird and hearing its chirps. No matter, then, whether we are in town or country, the Sparrow can be noticed. It seems just as well pleased to sit on our houses in crowded cities as on our roofs by the lane-side.

I would suppose every boy to know the Sparrow when he sees it, if not all its movements, so upon this belief I will endeavour to describe its habits. The farm-yard all the year round is a certain place where we can watch many of its movements. There it is to be seen in company with other birds, and can be easily distinguished by its hop when at too great a distance for plumage to be discerned. When on the ground in search of food, it frequently hops with rapid bounds, keeping its body in an oblique line, allowing the end of its tail to come close to the ground, then stopping to give a

look round to see if anything suited to its taste is near ; if not, it takes another run, perhaps this time having a peck, and off again. If it is fortunate enough to come across an ear of wheat, it will make itself very busy for a short time, if not disturbed, pecking out the grains and swallowing them whole ; but should other Sparrows feel disposed to partake of a few kernels of that particular ear, the one that has it in possession takes to its wings, flying off with its treasure in its beak, pursued by the opponents ; this flight does not generally last long, for it soon sinks to the ground, making sure of one more grain, when another picks up the remainder and carries it off, most likely pursued by the first finder : this is done apparently with an understanding that it should be peck for peck. Any schoolboy wishing to see this amusing circumstance, if not near a farm-yard, has only to throw a crust of bread out of his window on to the snow below, and he will soon be laughing at the Sparrows, for it will be a wonder if several do not take a fancy to the crust. In the month of February how often do we hear a great to-do in some bush close by, and, this having called our attention, we see a few Sparrows going to the place whence this uproar springs, and we find it is

a dispute settled more by noise than by force ; while other Sparrows sitting in trees or on houses close by, are either too lazy to move, or else they have been in the same kind of thing before and know exactly how it will be settled, only give a note now and then, as if to say, " Enough, enough ; " but in most cases, all the Sparrows that are near join in the riot.

These birds are always in company, either with their mate or else in flocks. During the time of nesting the male House Sparrow sits on the eggs in turn, so that the female can have a little recreation as well as himself ; and when the young are hatched, both the parent birds take a part in rearing their offspring. The nest, if wholly built by them, is composed of rough hay and straw outside, lined with feathers and such other warm materials as they can find near. The number of eggs usually laid is five or six. Many likely places for their nests might be mentioned. When thatched cottages were in use more than they are now, these birds selected them as favourite homes, and any one having ivy growing over his house knows well enough that it is a chosen place. In roofs of houses, or in trees close by cottages or farm-yards—in fact, anywhere near the habitation of man, some six or eight yards high, or

higher, one might say, "I wonder if a Sparrow has a nest there?" This bird often makes use of the house marten's nest for its second or third brood, for it is a very common occurrence for these birds to have more than one brood in a year. Perhaps it seems hardly fair that the Sparrow, having such a strong bill, should make use of it in the way it does by taking possession of the marten's nest by force; but it appears that it is not only the Sparrow who takes possession of freeholds, but it is the case with other birds also; the old saying, "Might overcomes right," might be justly applied here.

I remember one fine spring morning seeing two starlings going in and out of a hole under the roof of my father's residence. I watched the proceedings, and saw the Sparrows try in vain to get possession, although I knew they had had the right of building there for years past; at last, finding they were not strong enough to gain the point, they flew off, but in a short time returned with a small party of their relations: they proved successful enough to drive away the starlings, but in about half an hour the starlings returned with an addition to their number, and drove away the Sparrows; this seemed to satisfy the latter, and the starlings reared their young in the same hole that the

Sparrows had inhabited probably from their great-great-grandfathers' time.

But we will now consider the good as well as the damage done by this bird. I will give a cursory view of both sides, and allow my readers to draw their own conclusions. There is no doubt that Sparrows, like boys and girls, and many other creatures, are at times inclined to be mischievous. They can, and really do, do a great deal of mischief, both to gardens and to fields ; but not, as we believe, to the extent with which they are usually charged. The mission of their instinct has a large element of good in it, both for the ground and for the welfare of man.

Admitting its faults, let us carefully weigh the good which the Sparrow really effects. It is a great eater, and, though it feeds on corn in part, it has a quick eye and keen appetite for seeds of weeds, caterpillars, grubs, wireworms, and many more noxious insects. Now, here, if we consider only the number of small seeds consumed by it, which if allowed to grow would most decidedly take away a very great deal of nourishment from the ground, and which, if allowed to seed again and again, would ultimately smother the land, or cause the farmer to pay much more for labour to

clear his crops, it must be evident to all observant minds that the Sparrow has an important and beneficent work to do, which is specially if not peculiarly its own. It is a scavenger rather to be fostered than rejected. On the newly-sown ground in spring, many destructive things are killed and eaten by it, such as grubs that bore from turnip to turnip, or from mangold to mangold, soon destroying several of these necessary roots, required in winter for the maintenance of live stock on the farm, while frost and snow are doing their work. The wireworm is sedulously sought out by this bird, and when once within the grip of its strong bill, has no further chance of doing damage to cereal crops. It is a detective and executioner too to caterpillars and many other insects, which are very destructive both to our vegetable and fruit gardens, as well as to farming lands.

Of favourite places the garden is second to none with this bird; and it is a good thing it is so, or our gooseberry bushes would much oftener be stripped of their leaves and embryo fruit; our cabbages would grow stunted if undefended from attacks by grubs, or become of little value if bored into by the caterpillar. Over these, however, the Sparrow may be

said to stand sentinel, and keep more or less constant guard.

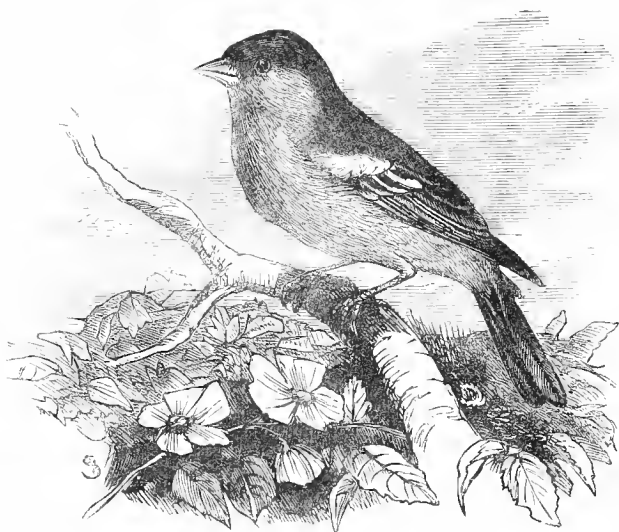
Again, when these birds have young, they are constantly on the forage for suitable food for their offspring, and as this must be something easy of digestion, and at the same time nourishing, caterpillars form the greater part of their diet. So we see this bird, which builds close to our houses, visits our gardens to clear off the destructive creatures abounding there, by this means conferring a great benefit and contributing to the general good. But all or most of our farmers cannot see this—or, seeing it, will not admit it. Do they not complain sadly of their crops if not so good as they might be? And it is a wonder if they cannot find a reason why their crops have not come up regularly in the middle of this field or of that! Have they not been brought up to farming? Surely they ought to know why the ground looks bare there! “Oh!” says one, “I remember those plaguey sparrows played away finely at this field, and that’s the result!”

Not quite so sure, however, gentle reader! There is a different colouring belonging to the picture, when your green spectacles have been laid aside. For it so happens, House Sparrows prefer being close to the

hedges or trees standing in or near the boundary-line; so that if the crops look worse in the middle of the field, it ought not to be put down to the Sparrows, but most likely something else has destroyed the seed or injured it underground. In the summer months, both the young and parent birds have a strong desire to partake of the unripe wheat, often taking every grain out of several of the ears nearest the hedge where they resort.

We have given the *pros* and *cons*, and would henceforth leave our readers to their own conclusions, simply premising, it may be well to take into account, that though these birds eat corn, both in the spring and autumn, most of it is picked up off the land, either on the stubble, long after the sheaves and gleaners have vanished from the field, or off the ground where it is sown uncovered by earth, so that, if it sprang up at all, it would have but little chance of coming to perfection like the grain which had been well embedded in the soil.





THE CHAFFINCH.

(*Fringilla cœlebs*.)

THE forehead is black ; the crown and nape slate-colour ; cheeks, throat, and breast red, fading towards the thighs ; the under parts of the body are white ; the back is chestnut, changing into green on the rump ; both the greater and lesser wing-coverts are tipped with white, forming the bars across the wings ; tail black, the outermost feathers edged with white ; the legs are brown. Length, six inches. Female : the upper parts greenish-brown, and shows more green on the rump ; breast and lower parts greyish-white.

Length, six inches. Eggs greenish and clouded, tinged with pink and marked with purple-brown.

In Germany this bird, being a very good songster, is looked upon as a valuable household pet ; and should there be one whose song is considered better than another's, though many miles away in open air, several persons will be after it, trying to catch it with bird-lime. There is a common saying in Germany, "Such a chaffinch is worth a cow,"—and I should suppose it to be so, when time and expense are speculated upon in such a way as this, for we read of ninety miles' travel being accomplished for this purpose. In many towns in Belgium and in Holland, a very cruel practice exists, with a view to improve the vocal powers of this beautiful bird, which always sings as if in ecstasies. The Germans confine them in wooden boxes or cages, just large enough for this poor little prisoner to turn round.

It is sweet, indeed, to hear the song of the Chaffinch as we walk under shady trees, and see it perched among the boughs, with the feathers on the top of its head risen as if to form a crest, throwing all its life into the beautiful warble ; but when we know the practice of piercing the bird's eye with a hot needle exists with

those people who call themselves "bird-fanciers," for the purpose of prolonging and strengthening its song, then we hear its notes with pain, and they are no longer sweet to our mind. Mr. Bewick makes a mistake in saying that "they are seldom kept in cages." These charming choristers of the woods and fields are said to do damage in horticultural districts; but if they take a few radish-seeds, or visit newly-sown fields of corn later in the year, they, on the other hand, clear away from our fruit trees and bushes many very injurious insects which would spoil a great amount of fruit, likewise they feed their young on caterpillars and seeds of weeds, doing a great deal of good; and therefore they are the gardener's best friend, repaying him for the little damage they had done before.

The Chaffinch is an active bird, flitting here and there, staying no length of time in one place; and in spring it always wears a holiday appearance. In severe weather Chaffinches take to farm-yards, where, in company with sparrows, buntings, and other birds, they partake of all they find suited to their taste; and where beech forests are, these birds may be seen in large flocks in company with the brambling, the beech-nut being a very favourite food of this bird.

The Chaffinch builds in May or June, and its nest is a wonderful piece of workmanship, and shows great neatness in building. It is composed of dried grass, moss, wool, and decked with grey lichen outside ; the inside is lined with hair and a few feathers. This nest is generally placed close to the trunk or thick arm of a tree, whence a few fibres spring. This bird generally lays five eggs, and is very attentive to its young. If any person is passing by its nest, the Chaffinch will be sure to come and hop in a particularly restless manner from one twig to another, uttering its well-known note, pronounced as "pink." This often leads the schoolboy to know its nest is near, and can be easily found. The young follow the parent birds for some little time after having left the nest.





THE BRAMBLING.

(*Fringilla montifringilla.*)

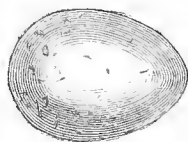
THE head, cheek, and back are black, each feather being edged with reddish-brown; the rump white; tail black, the outermost feathers edged with light; the throat, fore part of the neck, and breast, pale orange; the under parts of the body white; lesser wing-coverts pale light chestnut; greater wing-coverts and back tipped with pale reddish-yellow; under the wings yellow; the legs pale brown. Length, six and a half inches. The female is less brilliant in plumage,

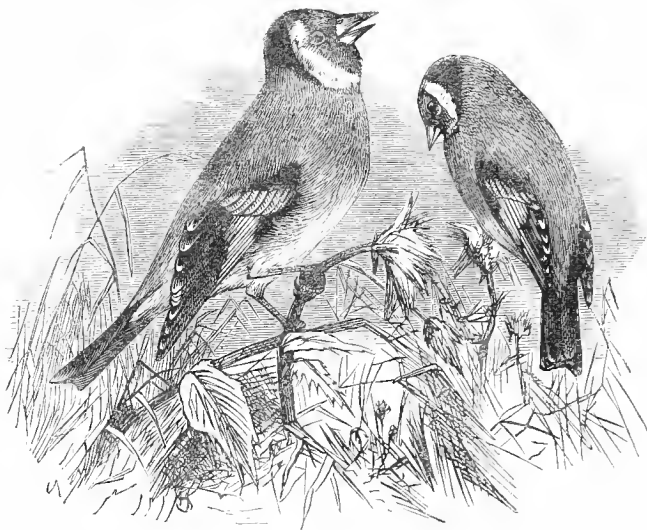
but the same in length. Eggs dirty white, spotted and streaked with deep red.

This is a bird that spends its summer months in northern countries. But as winter appears, we have a good chance of watching it, as these birds are at this time of the year very numerous, and particularly fond of beech-nuts, on which they feed in company with the chaffinch, some of the different kinds of titmice, the nuthatch, and the wood pigeon. I have seen one and twenty shot by the firing of one gun, besides other birds falling with them from the same shot, and when the flock rose, I might say with truth there seemed to be thousands, and I believe there were. This bird is as well known, perhaps, by the name of Mountain Finch as by the name of Brambling. In its habits it resembles the chaffinch, and perhaps might pass for such in a flock of birds to an inexperienced eye ; but when on the wing, flying from the ground with these birds, it can be easily told, as the white on the rump gives the appearance of a small piece of paper shooting through the air with a rapid motion. It arrives here about November, taking its departure early in spring. Its song is said to be like that of the chaffinch. Its call-note I have heard, but I never remember hearing its proper

song, as it returns to the North for the purpose of nesting. Its call-note resembles the greenfinch's "pee-wit," though perhaps not sounded in quite so loud a tone. It is said to build its nest in fir trees : its nest is composed of moss and wool, lined with hair and feathers. It is a well-made nest, and usually contains five eggs.

When on the wing and flying from one beech hill to another some little distance off, these birds fly high, very often clearing the tops of other trees in the line ; their flight is sharper than the chaffinch's, and it does not dip so much as that bird when closing its wings. This is a splendid bird, richly coloured and beautifully marked, at the same time bearing a great variety of tints, which give it a very uncommon effect, and render it well deserving to be classed with the Finch family.





THE GOLDFINCH.

(*Carduelis elegans.*)

THE bill is white, tipped with a shade of purple-brown; the forehead and under the beak scarlet, divided by a line of black passing from the beak to the eye; the top and back of the head to the side of the neck black; the cheeks white; the back brown; a lighter colour is seen on the breast and rump; the under parts white; the greater wing-coverts black; quill-feathers black tipped with white, and marked in the middle with bright yellow, forming a splendid yellow mark on each wing; the tail is black, tipped with buff; legs

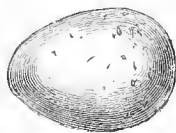
pale flesh-colour. Length, five inches. The female differs but little from the male. Eggs greenish-white, spotted at the larger end with purple-brown.

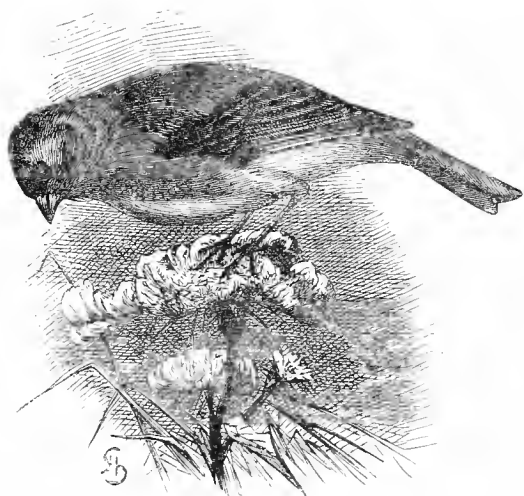
On account of the beautiful plumage as well as the song of the Goldfinch, it is greatly desired for a cage bird, and is known better by a great number of persons in a large town only as a tame bird, while the wild song and habits of this splendid little songster are lost to them; therefore, when paying a visit to some country friend, and wishing to know a little more about the Goldfinch, when taking a walk in spring near some elm trees by the road-side, not far from cottages, or if near an orchard, they hear a song proceeding from trees close by, resembling the one so often heard by them in town, they find at last, after close inspection, on the top of some of the high branches of the trees, their favourite Goldfinch perched, and hear his frequent warbles as he sits near his mate wiling away the time, as she is arranging the nest or sitting upon the worshipped eggs, making her life most happy. When kept in a cage, this bird can be taught to perform many amusing tricks utterly against the true nature of birds. Cages are made with a well and a small bucket attached to it, which the Goldfinch can be taught to raise when

wanting water, with its seed : this is one among the many clever things done by this bird. It is very affectionate, and soon becomes very much attached to its owner if kindness is shown to it.

When we see a number of Goldfinches together in the autumn, we need no greater proof to assure us the land is covered with weeds, such as thistles, burdock, or groundsel, for there cannot be a truer sign that a crop of these things is not far off. These birds do a great amount of good by feeding upon the seeds of these noxious weeds, and it is a pleasing sight to witness them spreading their golden wings to steady themselves on the frequently-giving-way down of thistles, and to see in full sunlight the brilliant plumage of these restless hunters, and hear their pretty twitterings, as if having an enjoyable conversation over their meal. Their nest is constructed in a very neat and compact way, and while building, both male and female go in search of materials together. When one has found a piece of moss, or anything else that is suited to its fancy, it takes to its wings, followed by its mate, to the place where the chosen spot is. The nest is composed externally of moss, roots, hay, and lichen, and lined with wool, feathers, and hair, and is

to be found in May or June. The female lays five eggs, and feeds her young with seeds of weeds, caterpillars, and different kinds of insects that are easy of digestion. This is a bird that does an immense amount of good, clearing the land of that which, if allowed to remain, would much impoverish it, therefore it ought to be very highly prized and esteemed, and looked upon in every way as a treasure. For song it is musical, for plumage it is beautiful, and the good we derive from it is wonderful.





THE COMMON LINNET.

(*Linota cannabina*.)

SUMMER plumage: the beak is lead-colour; the forehead is brown, each feather being tipped with crimson; the back is brown-chestnut; the feathers on the breast are also tipped with crimson, and show more of that colour on the sides; under plumage pale yellowish-brown; outer feathers of the tail edged with white, the two middle ones being dusky; the legs are greyish-brown. Winter plumage: the crimson fades. Female not so highly coloured. Length, five and a half inches.

Eggs greenish-white, spotted at the larger end with rust-colour.

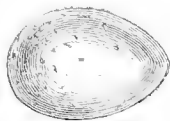
The Linnet varies in its plumage with the change of year, and through this it has been supposed to be quite a different bird in winter to what it was in summer, and according to these different changes it bore a name suited to its colour of dress: in winter it was called a Grey Linnet, and in summer a Red Linnet. Early ornithologists erred in supposing this; many country people now believe the Brown, Red, and Grey Linnet to be different birds; such, however, is not the case, they are all one. When kept in a cage the crimson does not make its appearance either on the forehead or on the breast, and the plumage is altogether less bright; but although confinement may do away with the brilliancy of plumage, it does not lessen its musical powers, which, when once learned from the parent bird, are never forgotten. If taken from the nest while young, they can be easily taught many pretty little airs and clever tricks. These birds are more frequently seen on or near wild pieces of land, such as commons or any farm abounding with weeds

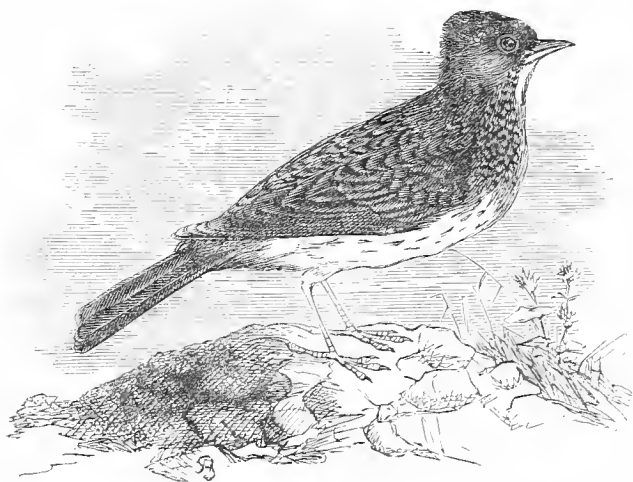
—*viz.*, wild mustard, charlock, thistles, groundsel, or dandelion—for the purpose of picking and eating the seeds. The Linnet does but little harm, if any, but the benefit we receive by it is very great, for it not only helps to clear the land of weeds, but also rids it of many noxious insects and caterpillars. In the autumn Linnets go about in large flocks, and at evening, when they are going to roost, may be seen and known by their rapid and irregular flight, generally settling on the top of some tree before taking up their nightly quarters, which are often in large beds or clumps of furze or in holly, yew, box, or other plantations of evergreens. While on the wing, as well as when perched in the day-time, this bird utters its simple call-note, which is soft in sound and rather pleasing to the ear. In the spring these flocks break up into pairs, often building their nest in gorse or other thick shrubs, not far from the ground. The nest is composed of roots, hay, and moss, lined with wool and hair, usually containing five eggs.

I would simply remark that the method of feeding, both of this bird and the goldfinch, is by sitting on

the stems of the weeds above described, and picking out the seeds, as they prefer this way to picking them off the ground. The Linnet can be seen in all parts of Europe, and is said to have a strong desire to feed on linseed, from whence it derives its name.

I well remember taking a nest of young Linnets, and using them to be fed out of a cup, and at such times they always sat on its edge. When I had kept them sufficiently long, so that they could help themselves, I allowed them their liberty, and they flew on the low boughs of the trees around my house. When their meal-time arrived, I took the cup into the garden, and whistled the two notes they were accustomed to hear while being fed: one after another came flying round my head, and at length alighted either on my extended arm or on the cup which I held in my hand.





THE SKYLARK.

(*Alauda arvensis.*)

THE upper plumage is a reddish-brown, each feather being marked in the centre with dark brown ; over the eye is a light streak ; the throat, breast, and under parts are yellowish-white ; streaked with brown on the side of neck and breast ; tail brown, the two middle feathers darker, the outer ones white on the outer edge. Length, seven inches. The female resembles the male. Eggs yellowish-brown, thickly spotted with a darker hue, especially at the larger end.

The Skylark is a bird well known by its song, and

being an early bird to rise in the morning—in spring pouring out its mellow tones, and catching the first beam of sunlight on its wings: it was this, no doubt, that called forth the good proverb, indicative of health —“Rise with the Lark.” When beginning its song from the ground, it rises in the air almost perpendicularly, and by many springs and hoverings gains an immense height, till it is scarcely discernible by the naked eye, pouring forth its song the whole time, and when descending, takes an oblique direction till within about a dozen or twenty yards from the ground, when, if the mate calls its attention, it will fall like a stone to the earth, with the wings close to its body, only opening them again when within a few feet of the ground, to steady its alighting. In July it ceases singing.

It seems cruel to keep this bird in a cage, surrounded by prison walls, the greatest pleasure being denied it, that of soaring to the realms above, enjoying there the purest air, charming all around with its delightful music, and where, on its return, it can refresh itself on the freshest and sweetest tuft of grass that grows.

This bird frequents high grounds ; the meadows and corn-fields are both favourite places for it, and from there its morning praise ascends. Mr. Pennant says the neighbourhood of Dunstable, in Bedfordshire, is much frequented by this bird, their numbers being very great. I can confirm this, as I have been there and seen hundreds in flocks, and from there, it is said, four thousand dozen have been taken between September and February, for the London markets. But although the Lark is sought after to form a part of our repast, it is still very common, and may be seen any day when we are passing through fields. The Lark builds its nest in uneven parts of the ground, such as the print of a horse's hoof, cart-rut, or between clods of earth ; the nest is made of dried grass, roots, and pieces of weed, the finer parts of these used for the lining. The eggs laid are from three to five in number. This bird generally has more than one brood in the year, and is very strongly attached to its offspring, ever ready to screen them from danger ; its first nest is made in April, the second in June or July.

We have no bird that approaches the habits of

game so closely as the Lark, as its place is on the ground, for nesting, feeding, and resting ; it will skulk in the same manner as the partridge, and will often allow a person to get within a few yards of it when in that position. It formerly afforded sport to those persons who kept falcons. The feathers on the top of the head of the Lark can be raised or lowered at pleasure.





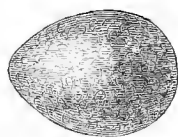
THE TREE PIPIT.

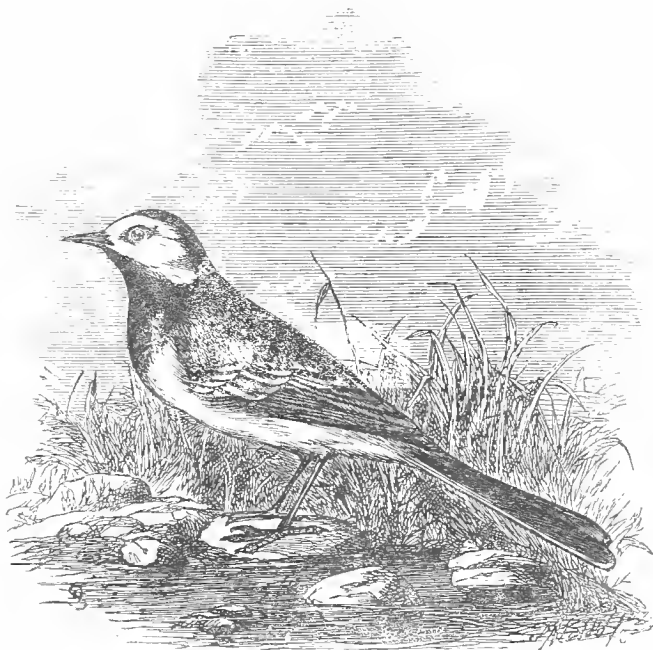
(*Anthus arboreus*.)

THE upper plumage is a brownish-grey, tinged with olive, the middle of each feather being dark brown ; the lesser and greater wing-coverts have a line of feathers tipped with yellowish-white, forming two bars across each wing ; the throat, breast, and under parts are light, but darker on the breast, and spotted ; the sides are streaked with brown. Length, six inches. Female much like the male. Eggs dirty white, freckled with dirty brown.

This bird, among others of the Pipit kind, has been classed as a Titlark, but now it forms a distinct species, differing from the Lark tribe in the slightness of its beak and the make of its feet; the lark soars, when singing, much higher than a Pipit. There are several kinds of Pipits, but the one most noticeable is the one here chosen. It may be easily distinguished from any other bird by its flight when singing; for, when preparing its song, it leaves the bush or tree where it is perched, beginning its notes there, and rising to no great height, generally returning to the naked bough from which it sprang, or to another chosen place close by, in a curved direction, singing the whole time, with its tail spread, and allowing its legs gradually to drop as it descends, for the purpose of alighting, which it does in a very easy manner. These charms are not very long, but are often repeated, especially if its mate has her nest near; perhaps I should not err in saying from every minute and a half to two minutes the little song is performed in the way described. When on the ground, in search of food, its progress is accomplished by repeated short runs, and it is often dis-

tinguished on newly-sown ground by the appearance of a greenish moving clod, the action of which brings our sight to the point, when we can plainly see and catch its movements. Its food consists of insects and various kinds of seeds. The Tree Pipit builds on the ground, under a tuft of grass or stunted shrub, in rough places, such as the boundary of a copse, or in a newly-cut quarter of wood; the nest is composed of dried grass and small roots, lined with hair. The eggs of this bird vary in colour, some being much darker than others, and likewise of a different tint; the number generally laid is five.





THE PIED WAGTAIL.

(*Motacilla Yarrellii*.)

THE upper plumage and throat is black ; the forehead, cheeks, and under parts are white ; a grey line of feathers passes through the wings ; the two middle feathers of the tail are black ; outer feathers white, except the inner webs, which show a little black. Length, between seven and eight inches. The female

resembles the male. Eggs white, spotted with dark grey.

Many people generally can better distinguish this bird at a distance than others, although they may be close by; this is through the conspicuous plumage and rapid gait peculiar to it. Its sustenance consists mostly of winged insects. These are to be found around cattle, brooks, pools, and frequented lanes. At these places the Wagtail may be seen to run rapidly for about a yard or more in pursuit of a fly, ending its chase with a short zigzag flight. This active bird, whether on the ground, wall, or house, is always seen jerking its tail, and, when on the wing, using its call-note, which is rather pleasing.

At the latter end of summer these birds go about in small parties, and to watch them is very amusing; their black and white plumage, being a striking contrast, renders them conspicuous, so that their quick movements can be seen with great ease, showing us what quick-sighted birds they really are. At this time of the year pasture-ground is more frequently sought by families of Wagtails than any other place,

where they rid the cattle of their tormentors. The young of this bird are always fed by the parent birds long after they have left the nest—not that the young depend upon the kindness of their parents; but it seems to be done through love, for when the old bird catches an insect of better properties than the majority around, it seems delighted to give it to one of its young; and, when this is done, it takes a short flight, hovering round the place where its family is, and at the same time uttering its call-note repeatedly, as if much pleased at the scene below.

These birds, for the most part, migrate southward, and in winter are to be found in our midland counties in greater numbers than farther north. At this time of the year they frequent homesteads and unfrozen brooks, where water is not the most pure; stagnant waters, where gnats are often seen late in the season, are also favourite places for these birds.

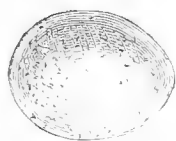
In April the Pied Wagtail makes its nest, which is to be found in ivy around cottages or barns; also it often builds on the sides of banks near streams, or places its nest between stones on the top of such

places. The nest is composed of hay, dead leaves, moss, and a few roots, lined with hair, wool, and feathers. This nest is rather a massive structure, and but little pains is taken about choosing the spot as to secrecy, or if it should happen to be in a hidden place, the old birds will let every one who is near know where their treasure is by going in and out of the selected spot with great boldness. The cuckoo often deposits her eggs in this bird's nest, and I remember a most amusing story of one that was hatched near the house of a friend of mine. He said, "After it had left its nest, the Pied Wagtail still continued to feed it, and the benefactors of this adopted cuckoo used to settle on the back of their monster charge, the young cuckoo seeming to understand the meaning perfectly well, by turning its beak round to receive the food waiting for it."

Country people call this bird "Dishwasher," through its being often in the water, and splashing with its feet as it runs after an insect. This bird only goes in water where it is very shallow, such as wide fords, where the water seems scarcely to cover its feet, and

where pebbles, both large and small, project above the surface.

When the Pied Wagtail is taking a long flight, either from fright or design, it can be told by the curved line it moves in, which resembles a chain hanging in curves from point to point—each abrupt stop being about the distance of three or four yards from each other.





THE SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.

(*Muscicapa grisola*.)

THE upper plumage is greyish brown ; small specks on the top of the head brown ; under parts white ; marked on the breast with a few brown spots ; the flanks faintly touched with red. Length, six inches. The female resembles the male. Eggs greenish-white marked with rust-coloured spots, especially at the larger end.

How often do we see this bird perched on a low dead branch, or on the top of a post, watching for

some winged insect, and, after perceiving it, glide from its resting-place, with a certainty in view, for the capture of the small discovered fly is sure ; and, after having caught it, it returns to the same spot again, or a similar place close by, keeping a sharp look-out for another. This is the conduct of the Spotted Flycatcher during the whole time it is not employed with its nest. When in search of food, either for itself or its young, it continues this routine of life. It is a summer bird, and arrives here in May, leaving us again in September. It has no song, and its call-note is very faint. Every person is sure to see this bird, as it is not shy, and will perform these active inmovements within a few yards of any one ; it is likewise easily seen when stationary, for its upright manner, when sitting, shows its light breast off to perfection, making it appear very conspicuous. The Spotted Flycatcher, perhaps, prefers a wall which a grape-vine, pear, plum, or any tree of that description covers, for the purpose of establishing its nest ; this is the reason, I have no doubt, why country people call it the "Wall-bird." Its nest is composed of twigs and small roots, built up

with moss and small pieces of dried blades of grass, lined with warm materials ; the number of eggs being usually five. This bird often takes a fancy to another place for its nest, even after it has begun to build the first ; standard pear and apple trees and other places might be mentioned, but I consider the wall covered with rough-barked foliage its favourite spot for nesting.

After the young have left the nest, they soon attain the habits of the old birds, and can catch their food with great ease. Though these birds seem to have a fancy for nesting near the habitation of man, when the young can take care of themselves they are more often seen on naked boughs of trees, or clumps of trees where cattle are in the habit of reclining from the heat of the sun, darting from their perch, and snapping the flies around, thereby relieving the cattle of a great nuisance.





THE NIGHTINGALE.

(*Philomela lusciniæ*.)

THE upper plumage is reddish-brown ; the under parts are a pale ash-colour, lighter at the throat and vent ; the tail rust-colour ; legs brown. Length, six inches and a quarter. The female similar to the male. Eggs olive-brown.

Although this bird is common in England, it does not favour our northern counties, and is but rarely seen in Devonshire and Cornwall. It arrives here

about the middle of April, and builds soon after its settlement, in the lower parts of a hedge or in a thick bush, placing its nest—which is composed of dried grass, leaves, and fibres, lined with hair and other warm materials—near the ground. The female lays four or five eggs, and hatches them with the heat of her body. The male takes no part in the work of incubation, but, while his mate is thus employed, he will sit near entertaining her with his charming melody. But when the young are hatched, he leaves off singing, and joins her in providing for their family. The Nightingale generally has more than one brood in a year; and I have found the nest of this bird in a particular stump of hawthorn for three years in succession; and if the hedge had not been cut down, no doubt I should have found it there for many more, as I believe these birds return to the same place year after year.

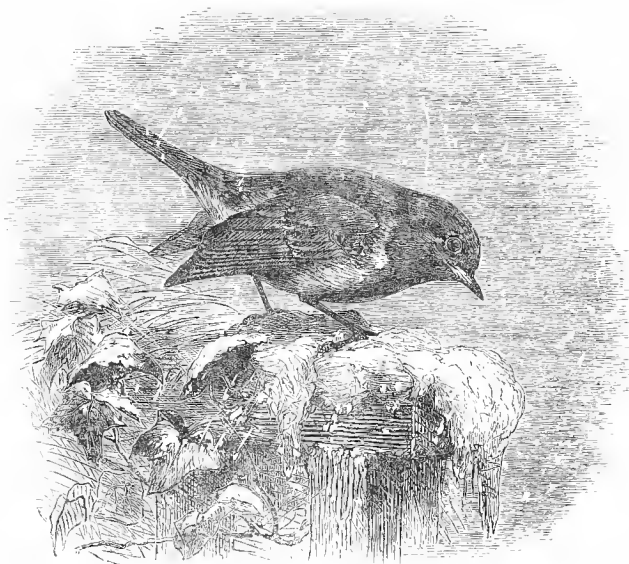
The Nightingale is a solitary bird, and pours forth its delightful harmony in the night, when all around is still—giving the midnight air the full tones of its enraptured frame; and at such times as these it sits

in a thicket or on a low branch of a tree, standing near a bush or in some hedge. It also sings in the day ; but the full music of its extended throat is not heard then to perfection. When this bird sings, its throat has the appearance of having a small bladder inside, showing a greater projection than in many other birds. The Nightingales feed on insects, small worms, eggs of ants, and sometimes wild fruits. On account of their sweet notes, they are much desired by bird-fanciers for cages ; and although shy birds, they can be easily caught ; but if they are captured after being paired, they will sulk, and most likely die, as all food will be refused, even every dainty its possessor may offer for a considerable time ; but if brought up from the nest with proper treatment, they will sing the greater part of the year. This bird, when on the ground, resembles the Robin in many of its actions. The hop and jerk of the tail are very much like that bird, only that when jerking its tail, which it does at nearly every hop, the tail is thrown more back.

The male bird of the Nightingale arrives here

before the female, and chooses its own place of residence. They seem to prefer the hill-sides of our mid-land counties ; and any persons wishing to be favoured with the delightful song of this bird, and having a steep hill partly planted with thorns close to their dwelling, I should be inclined to think they would find it the haunt of this unrivalled warbler. The experiment might be tried on wild land without much expense. I have counted four of these songsters all chanting at once in a distance not exceeding five hundred yards. This piece of slanting land I speak of is covered with furze and blackthorns, and belongs to the Rev. W. S. Baker, rector of Eversholt, Bedfordshire.





THE REDBREAST

(*Erythaca rubecula.*)

THE upper plumage is grey-brown, slightly tinged with olive ; the forehead, base, and breast, red, edged with grey where it comes next to brown ; the under parts are white ; legs dusky. Length, five and a half inches. The female resembles the male. Eggs yellowish-white, spotted and freckled with pale reddish-brown.

The Robin is a general favourite, and is looked

upon as a sacred bird, even by schoolboys, who care not to take the eggs of Robin Redbreast. This it seems to know, and upon such belief it acts through its life; for in winter, when all around is robed in white, this bold little fellow will often pay us most familiar visits, showing, at the same time, no fear of a human figure; but, on the contrary, it looks to us for part of its maintenance, hopping on the sill of our window and knocking with its slight beak at the panes of glass, asking for a few crumbs, which it is certain to receive, for an open door is ever ready for Robin Redbreast.

This bird, like the house sparrow, scarcely needs description, as its winter habits in particular are well known; but perhaps some of its summer ways are not so fully seen by all. During this quarter of the year the young show no red on the breast, and, in every other way besides actions and size, might be taken for young thrushes, as their plumage bears a striking resemblance to that infant bird up to the time of their first moulting.

The nest of the Redbreast is usually placed near or

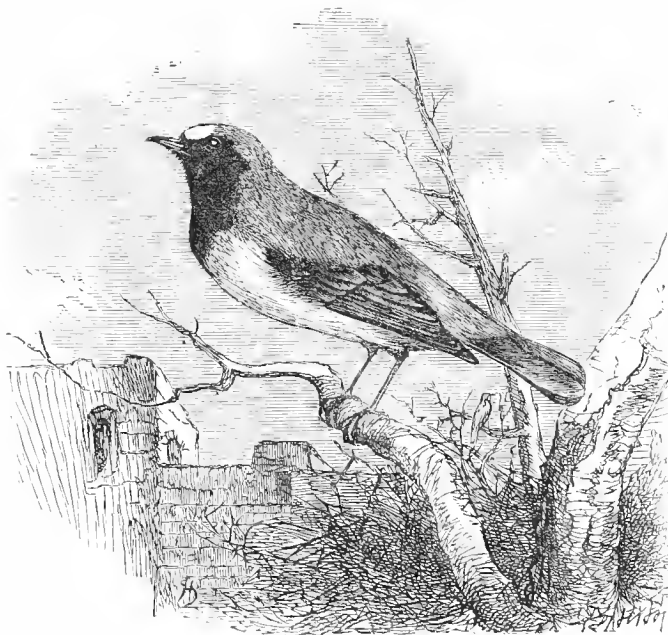
on the ground at the bottom of a tree in some of the forks of the roots ; it can often be found on a bank covered with ivy, and in a recess of brickwork of old buildings or walls. Many more places might be mentioned where the nest might be placed, but these are very favourite spots. The habitation of the young is composed of moss and dried leaves, lined with hair and feathers. The number of eggs laid varies from five to seven. The entrance to the nest is generally small, and usually partly covered with leaves. During the time of incubation, Cock Robin sits at no great distance, making the woods echo with his delightful warbles ; and should another bird of his species come in sight, he will give chase directly, driving away the intruder. I have never seen two of these nests close together, nor even two near each other, and I have no doubt it is on account of the bird's pugnacious habits.

The Redbreast prefers shady places for its feeding-ground, where it is most likely to find the food it likes best, which consists of insects and worms. Its dexterity in catching the latter is surprising, and the preparations of it before swallowing it are equally so.

When the hop and peck have been made, and the worm secured, it beats it against the ground, holding it by one end, till the inward parts come away, still cleansing it by pinching it when eating.

This is a solitary bird, never seen in flocks. When other birds are in companies, the Redbreast is seen singly. Its call-note varies beyond description in type. Its song is well known, and the pleasure its notes give when other birds are mute is not for me to describe, but is best known by the hearer.





THE REDSTART.

(*Phænicura ruticilla*.)

THE forehead is white; the head and upper parts of the back bluish-grey; the rump, tail (except the two middle feathers, which are brown), and breast rust-colour; throat black. The female is less brilliant in colour, and has no white on the forehead nor black on the throat. Length, five inches and a quarter. Eggs, greenish-blue.

This bird is migratory: it visits us about the twentieth of April, and very soon after its arrival begins to build its nest, which is generally placed in some recess, such as a hole in a wall, or in a decayed tree, or among its roots, and is formed of moss, hay, and leaves, lined with hair, wool, and feathers. The number of eggs varies from four to six. They are of a lighter tint than the hedge sparrow's. The young male Redstart does not receive the beautiful plumage of the parent bird till after autumn, and puts those striking colours on abroad. I have known this bird to build in one place in a garden wall where a brick has been taken out seven years in succession. At last a friend of mine shot the male bird for the purpose of preserving it, and for many years after that season there was not another nest placed there. This is a lively little bird, and although small, is very conspicuous; the white spot on the forehead placed on a patch of black is almost sure to catch the eye, as well as the continual motion of its tail, which seems for ever being jerked up and down during daylight; it does not matter whether the Redstart is on the ground in search of food, or

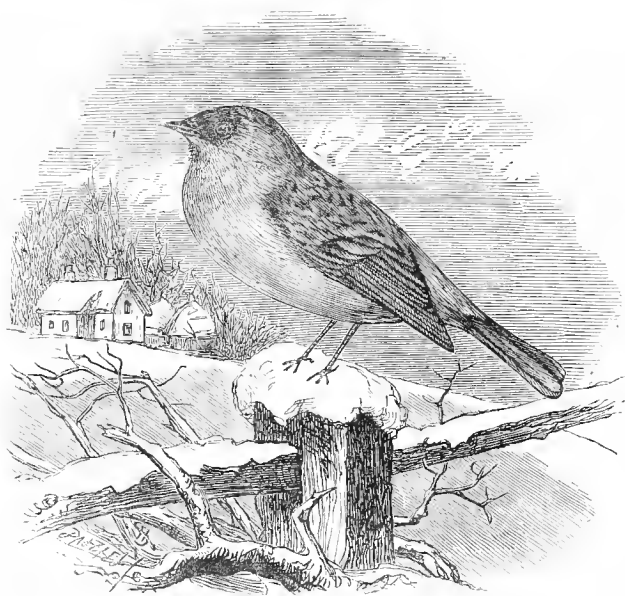
perched on a tree, or when settling from its flight, the rapid movement of its tail, shown by three or four shakes in quick succession, continues, very often accompanied with its call-note, which consists of two notes, the first a higher tone than the second. About the latter end of September these birds retire southwards. Their food consists of worms, eggs of ants, and insects of various kinds: in catching the latter they show great activity. The female Redstart is often mistaken for the nightingale by inexperienced observers. When on the wing there is a slight resemblance to that bird, as the colour of its tail shows very much like the latter, but when size and actions are observed, there is a difference.

These birds generally do not do well in a captured state, as they can hardly receive everything suited to their nature; and if success has been known in a few cases, it is very rarely to be met with, as they seldom or ever live long, being subject to fits, dysentery, and other complaints when kept in cages.

On the African shores of the Mediterranean these birds are very common. In France, the Redstarts

with the flycatchers are caught in great numbers, notwithstanding their diminutive size, and sold as a great luxury, being highly prized for the delicacy and flavour of their flesh.





THE HEDGE SPARROW.

(*Accentor modularis.*)

THE top of the head is grey, marked with brown streaks; the back and wing-coverts are brown, each feather having a dark centre; the throat, neck, and breast are of a bluish-grey; the under parts are a dirty white; the rump greenish-brown; legs brown. Length, five inches and a half. The female resembles the male. Eggs greenish-blue.

The general appearance of this bird when at a short distance is that of a dusky brown. It is mostly seen in hedges. If disturbed from its feeding-ground, it is almost sure to take refuge in one of the surrounding hedges, and from this habit it derives its name, which has been of old standing, while more recent publications of ornithologists very justly condemn the name of Sparrow, as this bird has not a hard beak for eating grain, but in every way it is a Warbler. The movement of the Hedge Sparrow is that of short hops, or a creeping attitude. It can be seen in our kitchen gardens, on our flower-beds, or by the roadside, pecking here and there at some minute particle which cannot easily be discerned by the eye of the spectator.

At all seasons of the year the habits and plumage of this bird appear to be the same. In winter, when snow is on the ground, it frequents yards both of the farmer and cottager, in hopes of picking up a few crumbs or other food where the snow has been cleared away. It is a shy bird, and seems to shun the company of other feathered tribes, being never or rarely

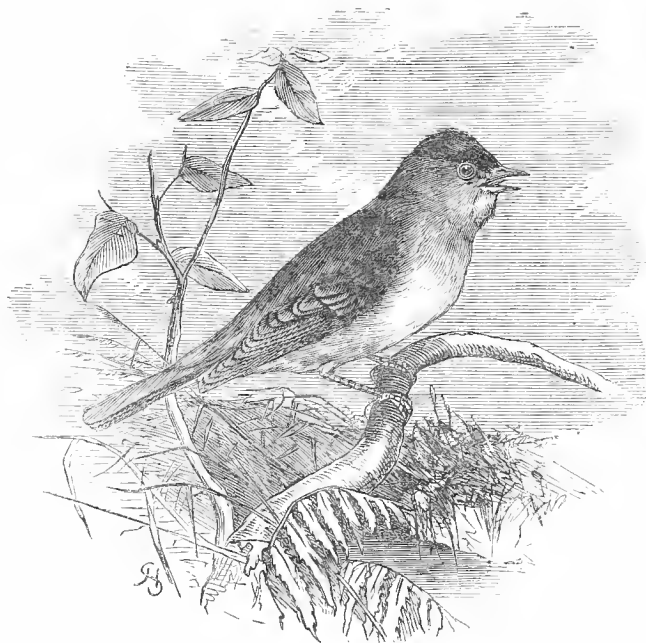
seen amongst them. Should it happen to be near others, it will just take a peck and hop away, hopping and pecking in this way the whole time.

In the spring, should a cat or any other ferocious animal approach near its nest, the old bird will endeavour to draw the attention of the unwelcome guest by much the same stratagem as that performed by the male partridge, uttering its call-note in rapid succession, as if in distress. If a cat be the intruder, this delusion generally has the desired effect, and puss crouches and follows the actor in vain. When the Hedge Sparrow has drawn Grimalkin far enough from the nest to ensure safety to the young ones, it flies and perches on some small boughs not very high. Then, for a minute, it looks at its intended devourer, and then takes to its wings, leaving puss to consider what to do next.

The nest of this dingy little warbler is built but a short distance from the ground, and is to be found in the month of April in thorn hedges, mostly placed in one of the stumps. The nest is composed of sticks for the foundation, built up with moss and wool, and

lined with hair and feathers. The eggs, which are five in number, show very prettily against the lining of the cup-shaped inside. The Hedge Sparrow quarrels with no other bird : its habits are every day the same, searching in a shuffling manner for its maintenance in the way already described. It will not attract an educated ear of music with its song, as its notes are imperfect when compared with many of our other warblers ; but its shy ways and inoffensive manner—putting, at the same time, full confidence in all who come within its sight—make it a favourite. This confider in man remains with us the year throughout, clearing away many caterpillars and insects in spring, and living on soft atoms in winter.





THE BLACKCAP.

(*Curruca atricapilla.*)

THE top of the head is black ; the back, wings, and tail are ash-grey slightly touched with olive ; the sides of the head and the back of the neck are light grey ; the throat and breast are silver-grey ; the under parts are white ; the legs and bill incline to blue ; claws black. Length, five inches and a half. The female

resembles the male, except on the top of the head, which is dull rust-colour instead of black. Eggs greyish-white, speckled with dark grey and brown.

This bird may be considered next to the nightingale for its sweet song, and may be easily distinguished from any other birds, as the full deep tones of a joyous heart are poured forth in a wild and sweet strain, as he sits near the intended spot for building, or perhaps not far from the nest, where his mate is well contented. This flute-like song is more like the warble of the redbreast in the changes of notes, only softer and more musical, giving at the same time a refined tone.

Many people who have a good show of raspberries in their garden know this bird is very partial to that particular spot, and that it does not enjoy the fruit all to itself, but seems to think as there is enough and to spare, it need not shun the approach of the owner. At this time of year the young families of Blackcaps go about and find good quarters with the parent birds, regaling themselves most delightfully on the fruit above mentioned, and shaded from the heat of

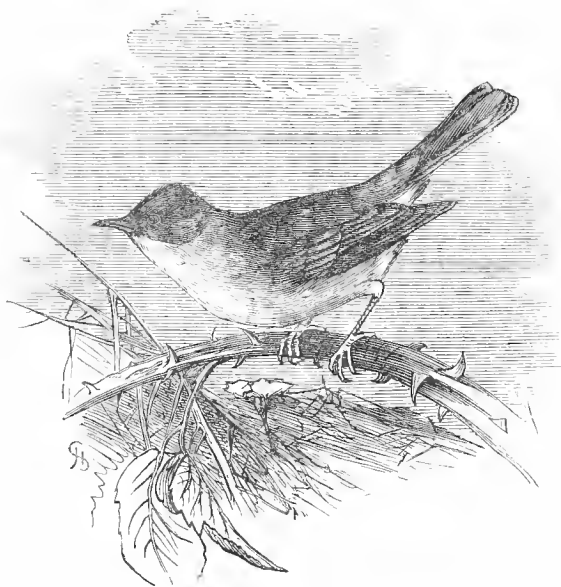
the sun by the broad clumps of boughs projecting from the stems.

This bird is migratory, and visits us about the middle of April, and leaves us in autumn. As soon as it has recovered from its sea-voyage, it begins an inward warble, as if to get itself perfect before public notice takes place; it sings much longer than the nightingale, and is in full song when the latter has dwindled into a croak. It builds in May, placing its nest in a low bush or hedge, a few feet from the ground; it is constructed of hay, roots and hair, and contains four or five eggs. The male bird relieves his partner in the duty of incubation, and often, while on the nest, betrays the secret home by his constant warble. Its movements are quick, but it is not so restless as the whitethroat, and at this time of the year its food consists of winged vermin, caterpillars, and other small insects, those which run as well as the winged ones: the latter it seldom captures in its flight, but, hopping from bough to bough, clears the young twigs of their concealed enemies, especially rose bushes and fruit trees.

This bird, in flight, resembles other warblers, and cannot be well distinguished by its line of movement.

If the Blackcap is kept in a cage, it will be found to inherit most of the ailments of the nightingale, and must be treated with great care and attention; it requires a home at least twenty inches long, twelve wide, and fourteen high, and holding three perches covered with wash-leather, and kept airy; the feet of this bird cannot bear too hard a grasp.





THE WHITETHROAT

(*Curruca cinerea.*)

THE upper parts of the head and back are ash-colour, inclining to red ; the throat is white ; the breast light, very slightly tinted with pink ; the lower parts are white ; the tail brown ; the outer feathers white ; legs pale brown. The female is more faint in colour. Length, five inches and a half. Eggs greyish-white, speckled greenish-brown.

This active little bird visits us with the swallow,

martin, and redstart, and is sure to be quickly noticed after its arrival, hopping from branch to branch in the lower boughs of trees, or creeping through the middle parts of some hedge or high weeds growing on the bank. This creeping and hiding manner is performed with several peeps at the inspector, reminding one of the actions of the weasel when in a heap of broken brick-rubbish : it shows its head first in one recess and the next minute it suddenly appears in another ; after this bird has taken a glance it is lost to sight for a second, and the only assurance we have of its being there is a harsh note, as if it were angry and did not want to be noticed, deeming the presence of the person intrusive ; it often slips out of the hedge on the other side, settling again a few yards farther from the spot it was in before, and beginning a new search in the same way, but it is betrayed directly by its frequent note. Should a stone or lump of earth be thrown into the place where the Whitethroat is, it immediately bursts into a volley of those sounds, as if to say, "I have had enough of you, and I shall be off."

The song of this bird is simple, and its twitterings are heard both while on the higher parts of the hedge as well as on the wing. During the time of singing it keeps the feathers on the top of its head erect ; in the latter movement it often shows great and pleasing activity while rising into the air—twisting about curiously, and singing the whole time—making its presence very amusing. It is more a hedge bird than for the ground or trees, caring not to be in a lofty situation, and, at the same time, it prefers perching rather than being on a flat surface. In England it is one of our most common warblers of a migratory nature, and is more generally scattered over this land than many of our foreign songsters are. On its first arrival it feeds on insects, caterpillars, larvæ of cabbage butterflies, and wild berries ; but when raspberries are ripe, it partakes of them in an unlimited manner with its young, who seem to think them just the thing.

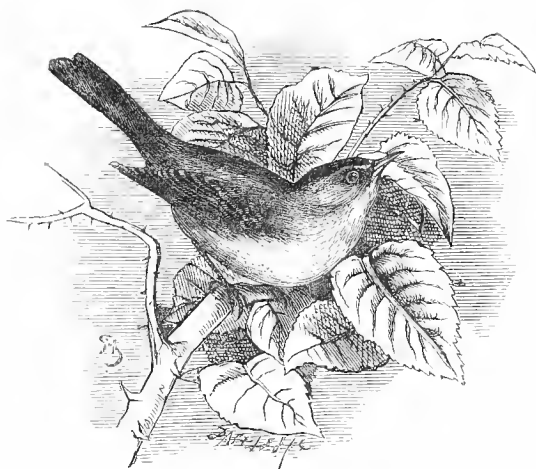
There is nothing very particular in the flight of this bird to guarantee it at a distance from other species of a similar kind, only that, when frightened from a hedge, it is in again directly, as if only leaving the

place when disturbed for the purpose of having a peep at the intruder, or else thinking a little farther from that spot perhaps safer.

It places its nest in a bush or on the dried stalks of strong and tall weeds, brambles, and nettles, usually within a couple or three feet from the ground. It is strongly compacted together of slight materials, such as fine pieces of weeds and grass, and is lined with a little horsehair. The eggs are usually five in number.

Owing to its great partiality for the common nettle, many country people call this bird the "Nettle-creeper."





THE CHIFF-CHAFF

(*Sylvia hippolaïs.*)

THE upper parts are yellowish-brown; over each eye a slight yellow line extends from the back to the ear; the under parts are yellowish-white; legs slender and brown. Length, four inches and a half. The female resembles the male. Eggs white, scantily spotted with purplish-brown.

The Chiff-chaff derives its name from the too frequent note uttered by it; and when taking a stroll through an orchard or wood in the spring, we cannot fail to hear its name almost every minute, as

this bird is very common, and in the latter part of April or May it is continually calling out its own name two or three times in succession, then remaining silent for a minute, when again it says "Chiff-chaff! chiff-chaff! chiff-chaff!" Its notes are uttered with rather a harsh sound, but are very pleasing, and remind us of the coming hot weather. It feeds on the aphids (*aphides*) that surround the young shoots of rose bushes, insects that frequent apple bloom, spiders, and other different kinds of insects, in search of which it is constantly on the flutter, and slides up and down the small branches of trees for the same purpose. This bird resembles the small willow wren or willow warbler in plumage and habits, very closely, but its legs are darker, and I consider this a good criterion to go by when the bird is near enough for that inspection: the note is different, and can only be known from that of the willow wren by an attentive listener. These two kinds of birds are often seen within a few yards of each other, busily engaged in looking after food, and always seem on good terms. These birds arrive in England early in April, I have seen them by the third

of that month. I have heard the country people call this bird by the name of "Bank-bottle." I have no doubt this name has been given it from the form of its nest and the place in which it is often built ; but it is not always made on the ground, as in some few cases it selects a spot a little above it, in a stunted bush with long grass growing through the twigs, or where sedge grows over and around the spot, but it is more often found in a hole on the ground made by a horse's hoof, or other indentation of a similar kind, the cause of which it is almost impossible to conjecture.

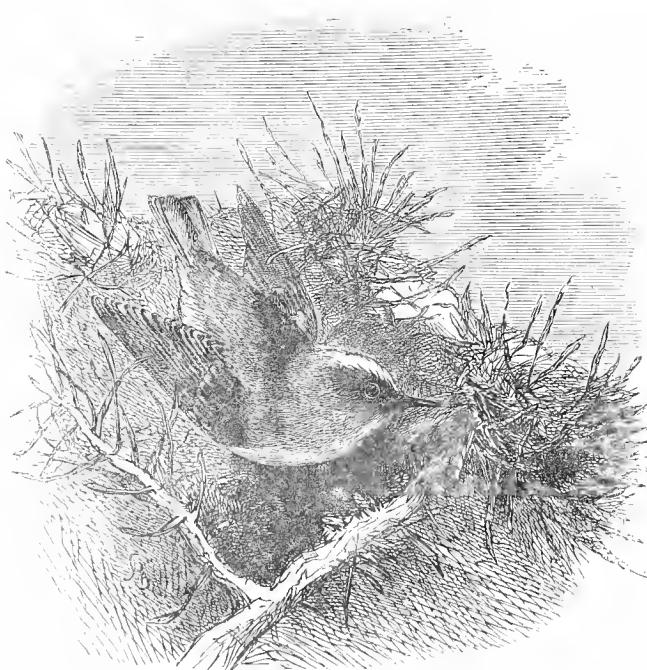
The shape of its nest is oval, with a small entrance a little on one side of the top, and is made of pieces of dried grass, leaves, and weeds, and lined with feathers and hair.

This bird lays seven or eight eggs, prettily marked with purple-brown, which can be told from those of the willow warbler by that colour, as eggs of the latter are spotted with rust-colour. Both these birds build in the month of May : during that time the little warble of the Chiff-chaff may be constantly heard.

When I was a schoolboy, I well remember catching

one of these birds several times, while it was sitting on its eggs, which were six in all, and it hatched them without showing any fear of my intrusion. Since then I have also noticed they do not forsake their eggs so early as many others of our native birds do.





THE GOLDCREST

(*Regulus cristatus.*)

THE upper plumage is olive ; the crest is bright orange, bordered on each side with a few feathers of black, forming an arch over each eye ; the cheeks are ash-colour ; the under parts are a yellowish-grey : the female's crest is lemon-colour. Length, three inches and a half. Eggs buff.

The diminutive size of this beautiful bird is very striking, but its weight is still more so. The one I have before me now is an adult female, and weighs only seventy-nine grains ; so that, by this calculation, it would take six of these fairy-like winged things to make one ounce ! Although this is an old bird, and I consider it in condition, I should suppose some would weigh under and some over the number of grains stated here. Notwithstanding its appearance, strange it seems to us that a bird of this small size and weight should delight in the highest of our forest trees—especially pines and firs—where it finds both food and shelter, and can manage with ease to keep its position, either on the wing or when perched, though the winter winds are blowing ever so furiously, and the trees rocking and bowing like reeds in a storm. The food of the Goldcrest consists of insects, which it captures both on the wing and on twigs.

This bird is for ever in motion—pecking here and there throughout the day, and hanging in every position thought of under the branches of fir *shack*. I remember one day in the winter seeing dozens of these birds

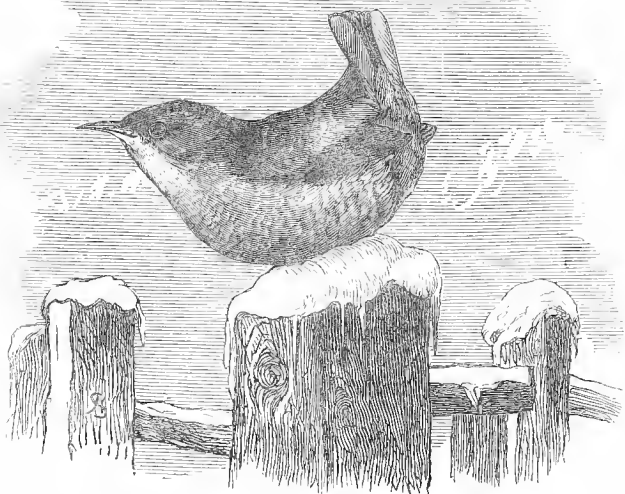
in a pine plantation, and they were more easily distinguished when in action than in other ways, for the little yellowish-brown projection from the green moss of fir fibres made by the presence of this little wren, gives only the appearance of a small fir-cone, and therefore a person's attention would not be likely to rest upon it. The most sure way of finding the Goldcrest, or "Golden-crested Wren" as it is called, is to listen for the note, similar to the chirp of a grasshopper, coming from trees around ; if we look in that direction, the eye is sure to catch some of its movements. These restless hunters prefer evergreens to other places. Their song resembles that of the common wren ; but it is not so loud, and is warbled in a higher tone.

The song of the Goldcrest commences early in the spring, and it builds in the month of May—generally placing its nest under a branch of pine, fir, or yew, where it hangs, like a deep cup, to some of the small tendrils near the end of a low bough. The nest is elegantly made, and composed of green moss and wool, lined thickly with feathers. The number of eggs varies from five to seven. The young do not show a

brilliant crest till after the first moulting ; the cradle in which they are rocked is sometimes very prettily decked with lichen, and often agrees in colour with the tints around, thereby making the chosen place a concealed spot, and thus escaping the observation of any one passing by.

This bird has great confidence in man, and will allow a spectator to stand and watch its movements within a few yards of it ; but the beautiful golden crest on its head cannot well be seen while alive, its haunts being too high and its movements constant. The sociability of this bird extends beyond its own species. I have seen several in company with the cole, marsh, and blue tits—all searching for food together in fir woods.





THE WREN.

(Troglodytes vulgaris.)

THE upper plumage is brown, marked on the back with several faint wavy lines of pale and darker colour; over each eye is a narrow light streak; the throat dingy white; under parts of a light brown, more red on the sides, and barred; the tail short, of a reddish-brown, marked with black; and the legs

pale brown. Length, three inches and a half. The female resembles the male. Eggs white, spotted with yellowish-red at the larger end.

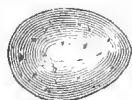
This bird is common in England, and remains with us throughout the year; during winter it approaches nearer the habitation of man than at any other season, searching for insects under the coverings of barns, hay-stacks, low cottages, and walls: at these places it hops from one projection to another, or flies in a straight line to different recesses or other places for settling; and should there be a short piece of old spouting lying in its route, this bird is almost sure to be lost to sight at the nearest end, and in a second or two will be seen popping out at the extremity. The Wren seems to like hiding-places. It can be distinguished from any other bird by its erect tail and the jerk of its body; in these movements its head is lower than its tail, and the latter is thrown as far back as the structure of its frame will allow. Towards the end of summer, and through the autumn, it is sure to be found in a hedge or bush bordering a dirty brook, near villages, and in such places; it hops from twig

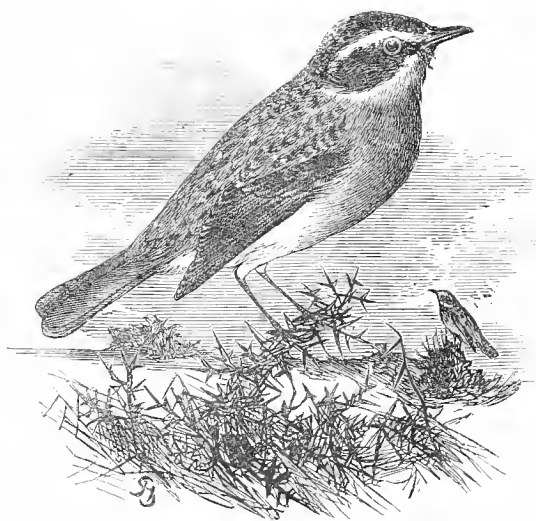
to twig very rapidly, which gives it the appearance of fast creeping or running, and, when disturbed, it flies in a short direct manner to the next bush, or to another part of the hedge some little distance from the spot from whence it started, uttering its call-note, "Chip, chip," on its alighting. In the spring it frequents woods, where its roundelay is poured forth within the hearing of several more of its kind, which take up the song, making the woods resound with their notes, which are of a high tone, and are repeated in rapid succession; it sings in spring, autumn, and winter, but the spring song is the loudest and longest. These birds build several nests in April or May, all of which are unfurnished except the one decided upon for the progeny; some are placed in very conspicuous places, while others are concealed; the one chosen for the purpose of incubation is lined. The building so many nests is peculiar to the Wren, as if it wished to be doing something, and at the same time not knowing exactly how it shall like its home till it sees the walls of its house built. The nest is oval, with a small opening in front, and is made outside of dried

leaves and moss; the interior is lined with warm materials. The number of eggs varies from six to nine, but I have known fourteen taken out of one nest. The habitation is very often placed in ivy grown round the body of a tree, and sometimes in a bank, or in the roof of a roughly-built shed. I remember once seeing a Wren's nest in a cabbage, where it reared its offspring: this nest was discovered by the bird flying out when the gardener went to cut the vegetable. But the most ridiculous fact I know about the Wren must not be omitted. Once I saw a nest of this bird in an effigy, which was put up on a small piece of ground in order to frighten the birds and keep them off the land. The figure was clothed, wore a beaver hat, stuffed with straw, and supported by sticks. The nest was not very discernible, as it was placed under the hat; and I have no doubt I should never have found it, had not the old bird flown out, either through the shake or the report of a stroke I gave the figure with a stick when passing by it. The young follow the parent birds in parties: I have seen nine all looking to one parent for subsistence.

We all know the names of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren, through the good old tales told to us by our nurses. These birds are therefore held sacred by children in England: a schoolboy will not take their eggs nor disturb their nest. This is not so, however, in the Isle of Man, and in some parts of Ireland, for a legend exists that "Once on a time there lived an enchantress who used her spells on the soldiers of Mona: at last a brave knight came to the rescue, and, when on the point of putting her to death, she suddenly metamorphosed herself into a wren, and popped through the doughty knight's fingers; but every year, in that island, it is said, she is bound to appear on Christmas Day in the form of a wren, with the sentence of death over her." Consequently, on that day a great onslaught is made by ignorant boys and men, who hunt the lives of every one of these innocent birds they come across, and on St. Stephen's Day they are strung and suspended from a bough of holly, and carried through the island, with a rude song. In the southern parts of Ireland a legend still exists of a Wren settling upon the drum, and

awaking the sleeping sentinel of the invaders, and apprising him of the approach of enemies. This is a sad tale for these poor birds, for they are persecuted through it most barbarously, as troops of peasants congregate together and revenge the perfidy of this ill-famed songster by taking its life, and hunting it for weeks before and up to Christmas Day. On the following day much the same practice exists as in the Isle of Man.





THE WINCHAT

(*Saxicola rubetra.*)

THE upper plumage is of a dusky-brown, edged with rust-colour ; shoulders of the wings are white ; a streak of white over each eye passes from the bill ; the cheeks are blackish ; chin white ; the breast rust-colour ; the under parts are of a pale buff ; the two middle feathers of tail dusky, the others are marked with white at the base ; the legs are black. The female is of a less pure white, and the breast is of a more dingy hue. Length,

five inches ; breadth, nine inches. Eggs light green, freckled with brownish-red.

The Winchat frequents heaths and young plantations of a year's growth, where the newly-planted acres look as wild as a heath. It is a bird which mostly settles on the top of objects which are not far from the ground. It is very restless in its habits : one second it descends to the earth, and in another quarter of a minute is seen perched on the top of some furze-bush, wild shrub, post, or strongly-growing weed close by, uttering its simple note, which it frequently does. It feeds on insects, and in France is thought very delicious to eat, as is the case with most of our insect-killers.

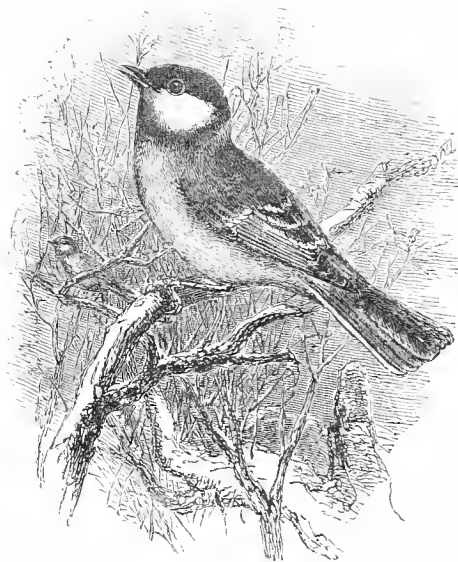
This bird is fond of placing its nest at the bottom of a shrub, such as a furze-bush, where only the eye of the builder is likely to be favoured with the sight of it : it is slightly formed and contains six eggs.

The Winchat may be distinguished at a considerable distance by its note, prominent position, and by the white line over the eye, which is very conspicuous. This bird is not gifted with charming vocal powers ; but it is pretty to see it fly, and, at the same time, sound its

simple notes, which it does while on the wing and when perched. Its usual flight is dipping; it resembles the pied wagtail in manner, only that it does not fly so high in the air, and the dips are shorter.

The Winchat is a migratory bird, and visits us in spring, returning to more southern countries in autumn.





THE GREAT TIT.

(*Parus major.*)

THE head, throat, and down the middle of the breast are deep glossy black ; the cheeks white ; the back olive-green ; the tail-coverts are grey ; tail black, except the outer edges, which are white ; each side of the breast is of black-yellow ; legs lead-colour. Length, six inches ; breadth, nine inches. The female resem-

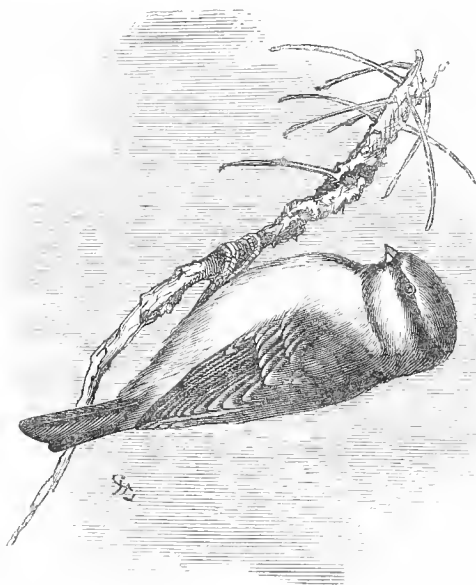
bles the male. Eggs pinkish-white, with rust-coloured spots.

This bird begins to pair in February, and builds its nest in April. The nest is composed of moss and small pieces of dried grass, and made up with other soft materials, such as feathers and wool. The Great Tit generally builds in a hole of a wall or tree, where it lays from seven to ten eggs. The young are blind for some little time after they are hatched. The reason why this bird is called "the great" is on account of its being so much larger than any other bird of the same name. It clings to walls and other rough substances when in search of its food—its head being in a perpendicular line with its tail—by the aid of its hind claw, which is very strong and hooked. Its food consists of caterpillars and chrysalides; it is also very partial to ripe fruit, such as apples and pears; and it is said that the Great Tit will pay frequent visits to filbert-stems and walnut trees, and crack them in crevices of the bark with its beak by repeated blows. When this bird is punished by hunger, it shows a bold and determined spirit, and will attack birds superior in size

to itself, for the purpose of feeding upon them: it strikes them on the top of the head, splitting their skulls with its sharp bill, and then picks out the brain.

Whenever any one hears a noise like the sharpening of a saw coming from trees close by, he may take it for granted this bird is in its refuge. The Great Tit is to be found in winter in company with the finches, tits, and nuthatches, where beech trees have dropped their masts, and the seeds of this tree form a great part of their winter stores. It is at times a sociable bird, and takes no offence at other birds being in close company with it. It remains with us throughout the year.





THE BLUE TIT

(*Parus cœruleus.*)

THE top of the head is blue ; the back bluish-green ; the wings and tail bluish ; cheeks white, bordered with dark blue ; the breast and under parts yellow ; legs lead-colour. In the female the colours are less brilliant. Eggs pinkish-white, spotted with red.

This little bird is very pugnacious, and will dispute its right with other birds even larger than itself ; it is inclined to be very quarrelsome, and will fight on the

least provocation. Its food consists of insects, apples, pears, and beech-nuts, and it is very fond of fat meat.

The Blue Tit, or "Tom Tit" as it is called, is to be found in every country place in trees, on the ground, in butchers' premises, kennels, orchards, woods, and flower-gardens, where it pays frequent visits to rose-bushes in search of the insects collected on the young shoots. This bird has great power of clinging with its feet, which it will do for some minutes together. I have even seen it hanging with its back downwards to a smooth round piece of iron driven into a wall which supported some spouting, pecking at something hidden in the joint of the iron and zinc; upon leaving it, it flitted to the wall, where it hung, tail to the ground, for some seconds. This is not a rare occurrence; it may often be seen in these movements. If any one living in the country wishes to be amused in the winter for some few minutes by the movements of this saucy little fellow, he has only to tie a piece of fat meat to a short length of twine, and suspend it from a standard rose tree within sight of the sitting-room window, and he will then see many of its clever harlequin tricks.

The Tom Tit makes its nest in recesses where there is an entrance by an aperture only sufficiently large to allow its passage; it builds in walls and decayed trees. I have known one of these birds make a nest and lay its eggs in a mole's run, but the two first places are generally chosen. Its nest is made up of warm materials, like the great tit's. The number of eggs laid by this bird varies from seven to thirteen. Should the female bird be sitting on her eggs, and a person put his finger into the small opening far enough to reach the nest, he is sure to receive a smart peck, which will most likely make the finger withdraw; and should it be tried again, another peck will be repeated without the bird moving from her nest.

This bird is much attached to its home, and when plundered, will remain near the spot making an unpleasant hissing noise. The young of this bird have a dingy appearance till after the first moulting.





THE COLE TIT

(*Parus ater.*)

THE head, throat, and part of the breast are glossy black; the nape and cheeks white; the upper parts are grey; the wings are slate-colour barred with white, slightly touched with red; the legs are lead-colour. The female resembles the male. Eggs pinky-white, spotted with red.

This bird is very common in many districts, frequenting woods, pine forests, and orchards. In the winter it is sure to be seen where there are a number

of beech trees, hopping on the ground in search of the nuts, which it feeds upon by holding them between its feet and pecking away the shell ; it likewise clears away a great many insects which are concealed under the rough bark and other places : these may be said to be its principal food. Like the former tits, its power of clinging is great, and many of the habits related of them will be equally applicable to this bird, but its disposition is much more amiable. The nest is placed in trees and walls, generally not more than a foot or two from the ground, and is composed of moss, lined with feathers and hair : it usually contains from six to eight eggs.

The young Cole Tits follow the parent birds about in parties for a long time after they have left the nest, as is the case with the former species. I have been told of these birds hiding such things as seeds for winter provision, when prevented by frost and snow from getting their usual food ; but whether this is the case or not, I am not able to state positively. We know the Cole Tit will do so when kept in a state of captivity ; and if it does hoard up then for times of

scarceness, in all probability it may do so when in a wild state.

This bird is to be found in most of our pine forests, in company with the goldcrest, and other tits, searching for insects and their larvæ. It is a restless bird, and can be seen flitting here and there, under the dark pine boughs, seeking for sustenance. Should it be disturbed from a lofty situation, it generally sinks within a few yards of the ground, where it begins its search as busily as before.





THE MARSH TIT.

(*Parus palustris*.)

THE forehead, crown, and hinder parts of the head are black; the upper plumage is ash-colour; the wings are grey; the cheeks, throat, and breast dirty white. Length, four inches and a half. The female is like the male. Eggs in colour like the last-mentioned, but the spots are larger.

The habits of this bird very much resemble those of the last species, and it is difficult to say which is the

most common. It frequents the same places as both the blue and cole tits, and it is not an easy thing to distinguish the latter from the one of which we are now speaking, when at a distance, as the movements of both are alike, and it is only on close inspection that we can discern the white spot on the nape, which puts an end to all doubt as to the species being Cole or Marsh Tit. This bird resorts to woods and fir plantations; it is common in marshy districts, and we are told by some ornithologists it is more often seen in places where willow trees abound, from whence it derives the name of Marsh Tit. It feeds on insects, and is very destructive to bees; its call-note is similar to the cole tit's, but less harsh than either the blue or great tit, and is sounded in a double syllable, like "Effee." This is often uttered, both when it is nesting and when the young follow their parents, which they do for some months after they have left the nest. This bird builds in holes of trees, and, like some other birds, if the hole is not large enough, it will chisel it out with its bill, and carry the chips away in its beak to some distance, leaving no trace of a nest there. I

have more often found its nest in decayed willows than in any other trees ; the outside of it is made of moss, and lined with warm materials. The number of eggs generally laid is seven, and they are more boldly spotted than either the blue or-cole tit's eggs.





THE LONG-TAILED TIT

(*Parus caudatus.*)

THE top of the head, cheeks, throat, and breast are white; over the eyes, back, and wings, black; the sides of the back and scapulars are light, slightly tinged with red; the under parts are reddish-white; the tail, in middle feathers, black, the others are white on the outer edges. Length, five inches and a half. The female is like the male. Eggs pink-white, freckled with pale red.

The Long-tailed Tit is the most sociable and amiable of our collection of common tits, for, from the time the young leave the nest until the next spring, both parents and brood keep together, searching each bush in unbroken friendship, and agreeing in every way. When one of the party leaves the thicket, it is generally followed by another before it has gone many yards from the spot where it had been in company with the rest, then another and another follows the line, till at last there is not one left. These happy families go about in the autumn and winter, exploring every place likely to supply food. Their skirmishers fly in a single line, as if to keep up the old game of "Follow the leader." They feed on caterpillars and pupæ of insects: of this last-mentioned food they are very fond—it forms the greater part of their diet. I have never known them touch fruit, though I have seen several parties of them in pear and plum trees when the fruit was ripe, as they have journeyed through our district. They never stay long in a place, even if it be one of the most suitable.

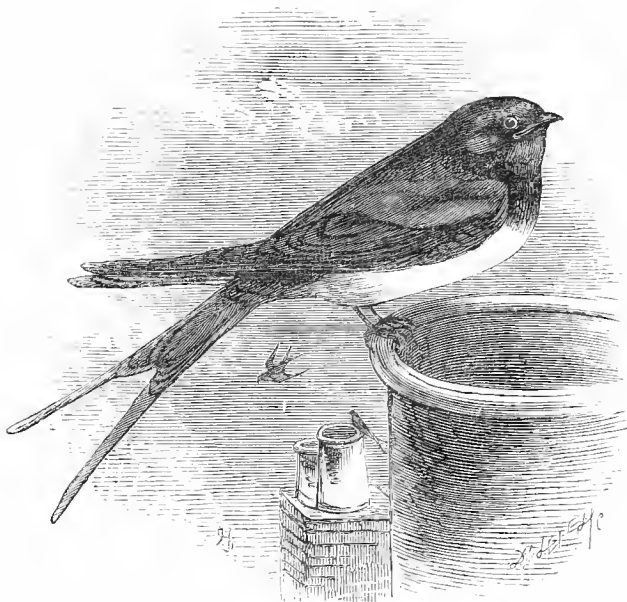
This bird has many names, and in different parts

of this country it is better known to the common people by such as "Long-tailed Pie," "Poke-Pudding," "Long-tailed Mag," "Long Pad," "Long Tom," and "Bottle Tom." The last name is, perhaps, not a bad one, as I have no doubt it has been taken from the form of the nest it builds.

The nest is to be found in April or May, and it is of the most perfect workmanship and of fine materials; it is generally placed in a fork of a bush, or attached to several small stems growing around the open space where the nest is fixed. The bird mostly chooses a thicket for it, such as a clump of brambles, blackthorn, or furze. The outside of the Long-tailed Tit's habitation is principally white lichen and the webs of spiders' eggs woven together with fine wool; the top is very closely made, so that rain will not penetrate; the interior is profusely lined with feathers, and between this and the outside there is a strong wall of moss, making the home very strong and warm. This is the most beautiful nest made by any of our common British birds. The form is nearly oval, but wider at the foundation; the entrance is a round opening, not

large enough to admit a man's finger without touching the sides. In this splendidly furnished room, which it has taken the parent birds nearly a month to complete, the female lays her eggs, which are ten or twelve in number.





THE SWALLOW

(*Hirundo rustica.*)

THE forehead and throat chestnut ; the upper plumage and bar across the breast are deep black ; the under parts are white ; the two middle feathers of the tail black, the others have an oval spot of white on the inner web, the two outer feathers are much longer than the rest, and form a fork ; legs short and black. The female has less red on the forehead, and the black on the breast is not so deep. Length, six inches and a

half; width, thirteen inches. Eggs white, spotted with dark brown and deep red.

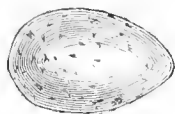
The Swallow makes its appearance in England about the middle of April, and leaves us again in October; it is, therefore, a migratory bird, and is seen in most of the countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa. On its arrival here, it frequents those places which are most likely to supply both food and shelter: mill-pools, thickly bounded by willows on the north and east side, which break the cold winds, are generally the first places to which the Swallows resort. As summer advances they disperse themselves more commonly over the country, and are then to be seen in every village; but where water is most abundant, these birds are to be seen in greater numbers. In May they build their nest: the walls are made of mud, bound together with straw, and lined with feathers. The nest is often placed a few feet down a chimney or on a rafter of a shed; it is very shallow, and will contain five eggs.

The young remain in the nest till they are fledged, when they leave it to fly about with their parents, upon whom they wholly depend for their food. As

soon as the young Swallows have learned to hawk for themselves, the old birds build a second nest, and sometimes a third. When autumn has set in, these birds assemble in large flocks, and at the hour of sunset are to be seen in great numbers where strong reeds and short willows are growing close to sheets of water. At this season of the year they seem to be more sociable than at any other time, passing both day and night in companies of old and young.

This bird is so well known, that it will be hardly necessary to give an account of all its movements, as its activity is generally known. It cannot be mistaken for any other bird, as, from its appearance, it may be easily recognized. Perhaps this bird is more easily told when seen in the spring of the year than in the autumn, as the forked tail is a decided characteristic, and can be easily distinguished; but when the fields around show golden sheaves, the young of the Swallow has a different appearance to that of its parent, as the long feathers on each side of the tail do not show so soon, although the shape of the tail is forked, but not nearly to the extent of that of the old bird.

In years gone by the Swallow, like the cuckoo, was supposed to inherit superior powers, and its migration was equally unknown. Many ornithologists believed it to remain torpid in banks of ponds, and in the hollows of trees and rocks, during the winter months. Many arguments might be mentioned of former writers on the subject to prove that Swallows do not migrate; but they would be useless now, as it is a settled question that these birds do migrate, and if one is seen later in the year than another, it is an exception to the rule.





THE HOUSE MARTIN.

(*Hirundo urbica*.)

THE top of the head, back, wings, and tail are black ; the rump, throat, breast, and under parts are white ; feet covered with downy feathers of white. Length, five inches and a half. Female like the male. Eggs pure white.

This bird generally arrives a few days after the swal-

low, and frequents the same places on its first arrival ; indeed, many of its movements are like those of the swallow—its migratory nature also. The two species may very frequently be seen in company with each other, hawking for their food, which consists of winged insects ; but though their flight and habits are so much alike, it is not difficult to distinguish the two kinds apart—either on the wing or when settled—as the long forked tail of the swallow, and the chestnut colour round the back, are totally different to the black and white plumage of the friend we are now speaking of.

The House Martin may be known at a great distance when flying against a dark background, such as green trees ; for it is then the white spot on the lower part of the back shows most conspicuously, looking like a piece of white paper shooting through the air in a direct line

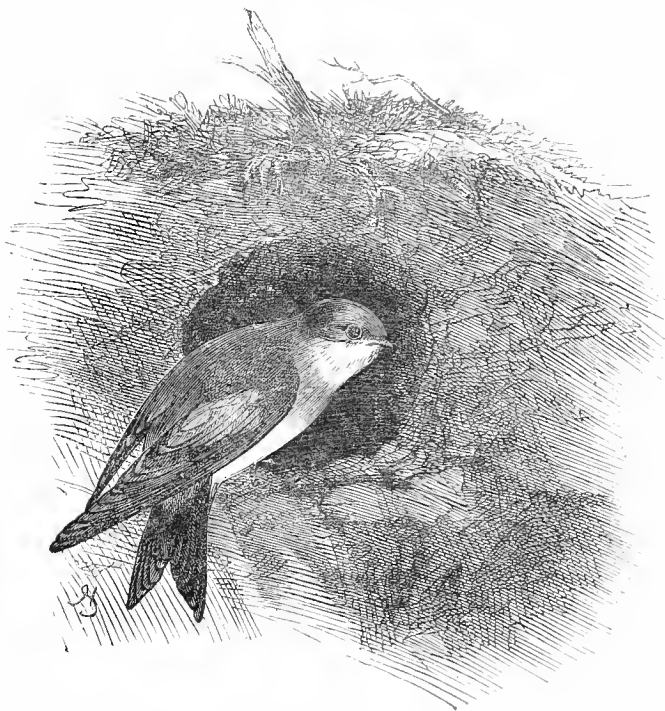
Soon after its arrival, it pays a visit to its old dwelling-spots ; for I believe these birds return to the same places year after year, though their old homes have probably been knocked down : I have seen them settle under the same eaves, two or three, or even four together,

clinging to the same brick, uttering deep twitterings—perhaps calling to mind joys of the past. If the House Martin has had a nest in any known spot once, and reared its young, it is a hard matter to make it forsake the spot, even if its building be destroyed every few days, so strong is its attachment to that particular place.

Like the swallow's nest, the outside of the Martin's nest is made of mud stuck to small pieces of straw, and lined with feathers. Here it lays four or five eggs, which are white. This nest in shape would be half-oval if the top were not cut off ; the entrance is through a hole, which space is left in building. The wall of the house forms the back of the nest, and the eaves cover the top. The young do not leave their home till they are fledged and able to hawk for themselves, which they do with wonderful quickness, and, with the slightest turn of the wing, they glide any way they may desire ; and it is while in these motions they catch their food. Without this species of birds we should be under a great plague, for the number of flies caught by them must be very surprising.

When about to quit this island, they assemble in very large flocks, and may often be seen by hundreds together in an evening where water and reeds abound; but I fear these dear friends must undergo vast losses during their absence from this country, as the birds that return yearly bear no manner of proportion to the number that leave us in October. They rear two or three broods in a year, and are everywhere abundant.





THE SAND MARTIN.

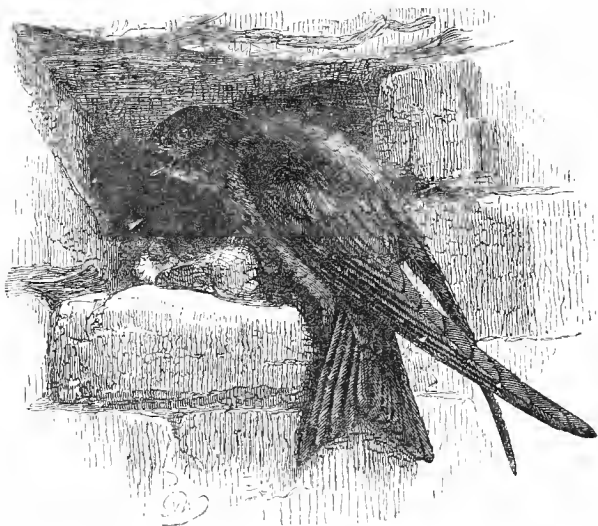
(*Hirundo riparia*.)

THE upper plumage, from the head to the tail, is mouse-colour ; the throat and fore part of the neck white ; a bar of mouse-colour crosses the breast ; the under parts are white ; the legs are dark brown. The female is like the male. Length, five inches. Eggs pure white.

This is the smallest of our Swallow tribe, and also the least in number ; it resorts to high sand-hills that have been dug, leaving a perpendicular bank, and it is at such smooth places as these our eyes catch a number of small round holes, about the size of rats' burrows, which are made by the Sand Martin, and in them they build their nest and rear their offspring. The nest is carelessly constructed of pieces of straw, hay, and feathers, and usually contains five or six eggs. This bird is said to have but one brood in the year. The Sand Martin is very tame, and will continue going in and out of the cell even when a spectator is standing within thirty or forty yards of its colony, and a person can easily tell last year's birds from fresh comers, as the latter's work is much harder than the old settlers', who have their recesses already formed from years past, unless the high bank has been disturbed. These holes are made by rubbing off the sand with the sides of their beak, and moving round and round, throwing out the loose sand with their feet, until they are far enough in to secure safety from the weather. I have known these nests

go into the bank for a yard or more, while others have only been placed a short distance from the outside : this may be from a large stone being in the way, and thus impeding their progress. This work is carried on early in the morning, and costs some time before the tenants are satisfied. The Sand Martin often wanders miles away from home ; even in the brooding season I have seen them flying from the bank towards me, and have watched them out of sight in the direction of a large piece of water, where there have been several skimming over the surface of the water, with others of the Swallow tribe, and no other Sand Martin colony nearer than their own.





THE COMMON SWIFT

(*Cypselus apus.*)

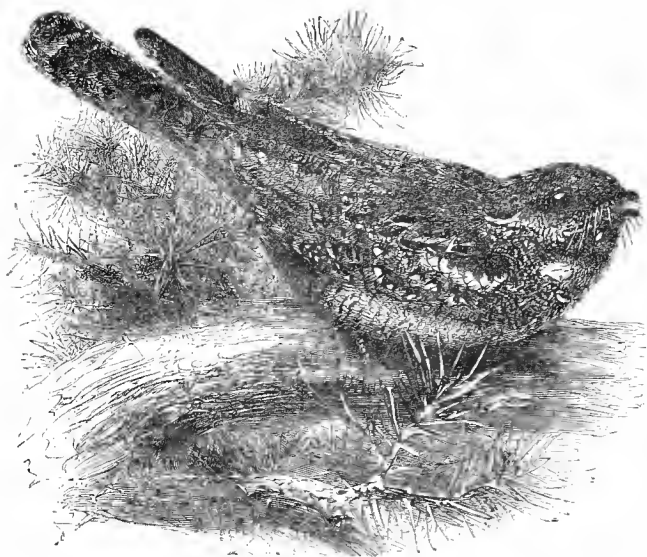
THE whole of the plumage, except the throat, is sooty black; the throat is white. Length, eight inches; width, seventeen inches. The female resembles the male. Eggs pure white.

This bird is very properly named, for it is not only the fastest traveller of the Swallow tribe, but it excels all other birds in its rapid flight. It will perform the voyage from Africa to England without showing any fatigue. The Swift arrives later and departs sooner

than any other of the Swallow species. I should suppose this is on account of its susceptibility to cold. It is also larger, and its voice is stronger than others of its kind. The life of this bird is divided into two extremes—that of the most rapid flight and utter inaction. The Swift cannot alight with ease on the ground, as its wings are so very long and its legs wonderfully short; so it either darts through the air or remains in its hole, which is generally in the roof of an old house. This bird is more frequently seen early in the morning or after sunset, as it cannot bear the heat of the sun. At these times it goes out in quest of food, and can then be seen in flocks, wheeling round in circles several times in the course of a few minutes, and uttering a screaming whistle. Sometimes the Swifts will make their way down a street, at another time they will whirl round a church spire or other high building, and at such times they often glide along without our being able to observe the movement of a feather; in another second their wings are suddenly in fast action, but as evenly as if they were turned on a pivot by machinery.

This bird builds its nest in elevated places, such as old steeples, towers, and roofs of houses. A small passage leads to the nest, which is composed of a variety of materials that the wind can waft aloft, such as small pieces of muslin, feathers, and other light substances. It is supposed to catch these things in the air. The nest is of a careless structure, and usually contains five eggs, rather spindle-shaped. The duty of incubation is performed in May: the young are obliged to stay in the nest as a matter of necessity until the latter end of June, when they are quite fledged, and are then able to take care of themselves. These birds, both old and young, assemble in large numbers in July, and continue doing so till the month of August, after which they are to be seen no more in England.





THE NIGHT-JAR.

(*Caprimulgus Europæus.*)

THE bill is flat, and furnished with several strong bristles on each side of the upper mandible. The general plumage is mottled with grey and various hues of brown, mixed with white and black. Length, ten inches; width, twenty-two inches. Eggs dull white, beautifully marbled with brown.

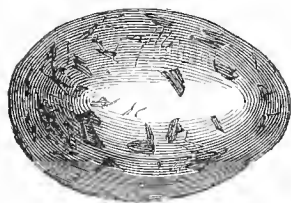
This bird has several names: "Goatsucker," "Dor Hawk," and "Fern Owl." The first of the three last mentioned is derived from a fabulous habit ascribed

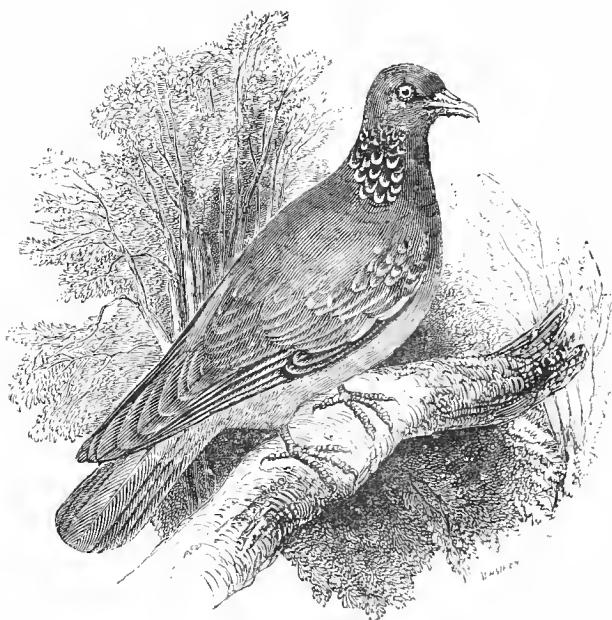
to it by the superstition and ignorance of naturalists of olden times. It was said this bird found its way in the night season to the pens of goats, and sucked their dugs, thereby poisoning them to such a degree that the animal went blind, and the udder dried up; but this popular name of past days is fast dying away, and the name Night-jar is used, which is more characteristic of this bird, from the jarring noise made by it while at rest and perched on a tree. This sound resembles the weak spring of a watchman's rattle swung quickly round, often changing to different parts of the district, and may frequently be heard in the evenings of June. When this bird utters its humming noise, it is said to perch on a bough with its feet resting lengthwise, as its claws are not adapted for grasping; but I have often seen it sitting across a huge limb of a tree in a skulking attitude. A naked spot is generally chosen by it to alight, such as a dead arm of a tree, or a stem without any twigs. It is at such times and places as are last described the Night-jar indulges in its volumes of sound. The bird is to be found near wild places, such as moors, heathy dis-

tricts, and woods ; any one out for a ramble on a summer's evening cannot hear this particular noise without noticing it ; and although this bird is not so often seen as many others, its notes are most striking, breaking the silence of twilight, as it cannot bear the rays of the sun. It may be seen also in heavy cloudy weather, or when disturbed by passers-by. Its food consists of dor beetles and moths, which it catches on the wing. From its great liking for the dor beetle or chafer it derives the name of Dor Hawk. I have found seven of these insects in its stomach, besides other things, such as pieces of moths. The Night-jar is migratory, and is the last of our summer birds of passage to arrive in England, visiting us about the middle or end of May, and returning southwards in the latter part of September.

The Night-jar is a solitary bird, and is never seen in flocks : its flight is irregular, and at times very rapid ; sometimes it is seen wheeling round a tree, making several circles in quick motion, then diving and skimming across an open piece of ground, when suddenly it rises in the air to perform unexpected move-

ments ; but the peculiarity of this bird is its mouth, which when open is large enough to contain the head of another bird of its own size. On plains of fern its eggs, which are two, are to be found, generally placed under a bunch of that plant on the ground ; for, like the owl, it makes no nest.





THE WOOD PIGEON OR RING DOVE.

(*Columba palumbus.*)

THE bill is yellow ; the upper plumage bluish-grey, rather deeper on the back ; on each side of the neck there are a few white feathers, forming two distinct crescents ; above and beneath are feathers glossed with green and purple reflections ; breast reddish, fading downwards ; tail barred with black ; legs red. The

female resembles the male. Length, sixteen inches. The eggs are white.

For many years past the habit of keeping different kinds of pigeons was as popular as at the present time. The carriers, tumblers, jacobins, pouters, runts, shakers, &c., may be found spoken of as a part of furniture for a mansion or farmyard, so there can be no doubt that tame pigeons are of very ancient date, and it is believed the domestic varieties were produced originally from the rock pigeon.

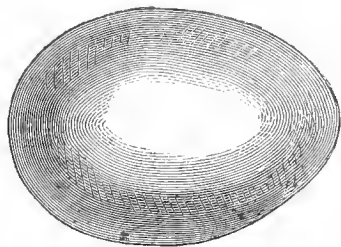
The Wood Pigeon is the largest species we have in Britain, and can be seen at all times of the year in woody districts. If, in summer-time, it be started from a tree where its mate is on the nest, it will rise in the air, with its wings spread open, and ascend almost in a perpendicular line; then, descending a little way, its wings give three or four claps, and it is again performing its proud flight. This bird has a large crop, and, like other pigeons, partakes of its meals freely, and after filling its crop, will rest, to allow the digestive organs to do their proper work. I once shot one of these birds when flying over my

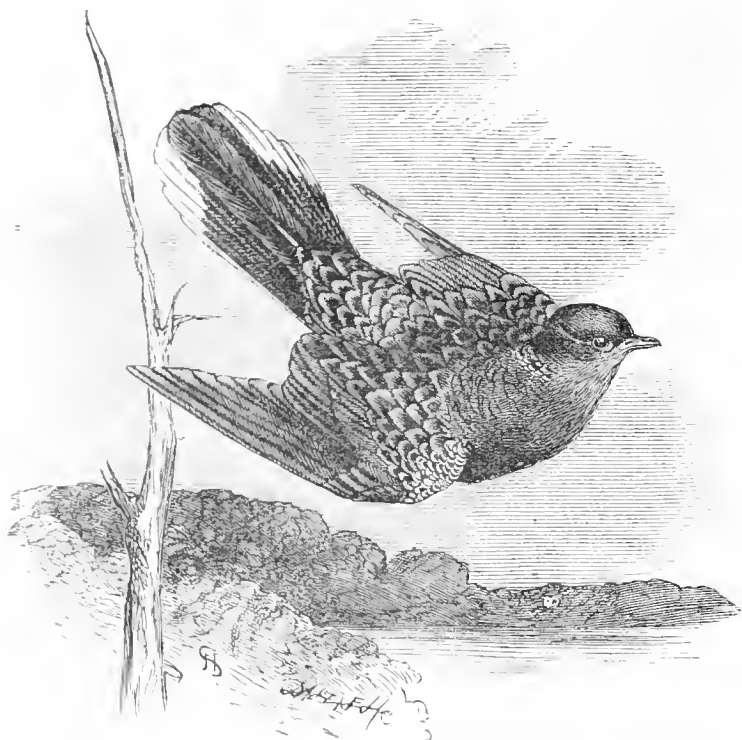
head, and it fell in the road I was proceeding along. It was near the hour of sunset. I suppose the Wood Pigeon was on its way to a fir plantation where several roosted, which was both in the direction of its flight, and also in sight. Finding the crop of this bird injured in falling, and seeing so many acorns protruding, my curiosity was excited to know how many it contained: to my surprise, I found twenty-eight large seeds of the oak, which, when put in a heap on the ground, looked impossible that so many could have been crammed into so small a space.

The Wood Pigeon or Ring Dove is like others of its species: when requiring drink it does not keep dipping its bill in the water, allowing only a few drops of water to pass down its throat at every draught, as is the case with the barndoor fowl, but it places its bill in the water up to its nostrils, and drinks sufficient before taking it away. This bird has never been considered the originator of our tame pigeons, nor will it do well in captivity, as it prefers breeding among thick trees, such as pine, fir, ivy, holly, and other evergreens of a concealing nature. Its nest is usually

placed in a fork, or on strong twigs lying in a horizontal line. It builds its nest of sticks ; so loosely is it put together that the eggs can be easily seen through the bottom by a person standing underneath. This bird always lays two eggs, and has only two broods in a year. The young feed by thrusting their bills into their parent's throat, thereby helping themselves out of the old bird's crop : they feed on seeds of grass, corn, and seeds of trees ; likewise in winter, when snow is on the ground, they partake freely of turnips, which are said to make their flesh taste unpleasant, but during the harvest season of acorns they are very fat and nice eating, especially the young ones. This bird is very generally diffused throughout Europe, and in the north of England is very abundant. It is said to migrate, but that it does not leave us is certain, for large flocks of these birds are to be seen in winter, amounting to some thousands, where beech forests abound, and we know it breeds in our fir plantations. The Ring Dove has a louder and longer coo than other pigeons, being at the same time more plaintive, and it is one of the first of our forest

birds to inform us that winter is past. Strange to say, though the general character of this bird is shy and timid, at this time of the year it becomes very different, and will allow a spectator to approach within a short distance of it.





THE TURTLE DOVE.

(*Columba turtur.*)

THE head and nape are of an ash-colour ; the back is grey ; the wing-coverts and scapulars reddish-brown, marked with black in the centre of each feather. On the side of the neck are a few black feathers tipped with white ; the breast pale wine-red ; the under parts

are white ; the two middle feathers of the tail brown, the rest are dusky tipped with white, the two outer ones are edged with white as well as being tipped. The feet are red. Length, twelve inches. Eggs pure white.

This bird has been represented in all ages as the emblem of matrimonial attachment : it is found in all southern countries of Europe, and arrives in England late in the spring. It visits our midland and southern counties more particularly than any others. This bird is the smallest of our British Dove tribe. The Turtle Dove so frequently seen in wicker cages is a native of India, and its proper name is Collared Turtle Dove (*Columba risoria*). Its plumage is cream-colour, with a crescent of black on its neck ; this, however, has no claim to our British collection. Our species frequents the thickest and most sheltered parts of plantations, where it builds its nest in June, and lays, like other birds of its kind, only two eggs, which are deposited on a few sticks. The young do not have the black mark on the neck until the first moult.

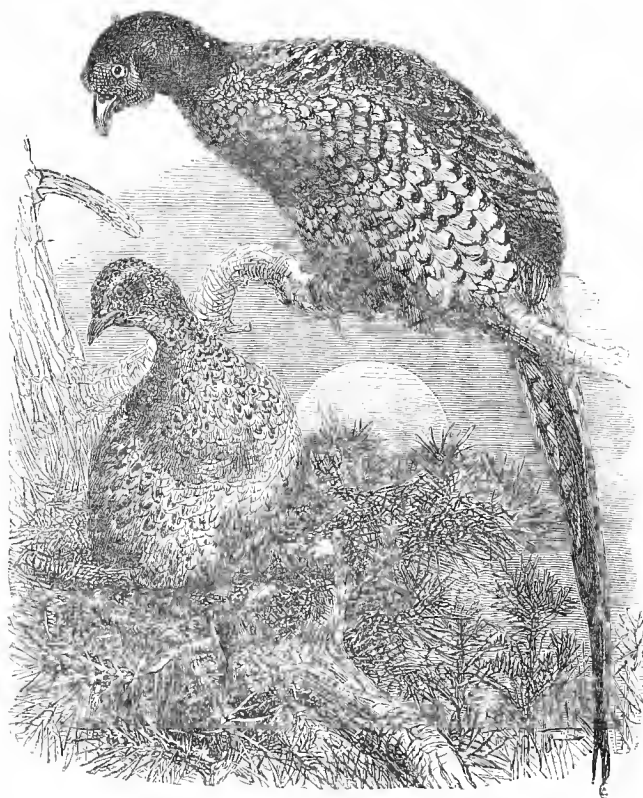
The Turtle Dove has been charged with taking to

the wheat-fields while the grain has been in a milky state for the purpose of devouring it : this I have never known to be the case. I have shot several from such places, but have found their food to consist chiefly of chickweed-seeds. These birds are very partial to places, and are not easily frightened. Clover-fields, where trefoil and ripe grass-seeds abound, are very favourite places, to which they pay daily visits, also to a particular kind of vetch-seed and field-peas.

The flight of this bird is rapid, and resembles that of the missel thrush so closely, that at a distance, if the bird is not flying across the sight, it is difficult to decide which of the two it is. These beautifully marked birds remain with us only a few months, during which time they pair and rear their young, which are strong enough to join their parents in their southern journey by the latter end of August. The note of this bird can be very nearly sounded by pronouncing five or six r-r-r-r's in a rolling manner by the tongue quivering at the end in one breath, which will last four or five seconds. The Turtle Dove is an inhabitant of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It arrives in England about the end

of April. I once took a couple of young Turtle Doves out of a nest and kept them in a cage for some time. They grew up to be very tame—so much so, that when I opened the door of the cage, they would fly and settle on my shoulder, and peck their food out of my fingers.





THE COMMON PHEASANT.

(*Phasianus Colchicus.*)

THE head and neck are very dark, with reflections of blue, green, and purple ; round the eye is a naked warty skin, of a splendid scarlet, minutely speckled with black. The general plumage is orange shaded

with purple and brown ; the breast-feathers are tipped with glossy purple, which becomes more blue on the larger feathers of the lower sides ; the tail is long, and each feather is barred with a darker brown than the feathers bear. Length, three feet. The female is light brown, most of the feathers have dusky centres, the tail much shorter, and the red round the eye is scarcely seen. Eggs olive-brown.

The Pheasant is said to have derived its name from the river Phasis, and was originally brought from Colchis, a country on the borders of the Black Sea. There are great varieties of Pheasants, some possessing extraordinary brilliancy of colour. Many of those brought from China are kept here in aviaries. Our common Pheasant frequents the thickest of our woods, and where furze, rushes, and briars abound they hide and feed. The daily life of this bird is passed upon the ground ; it even roosts in the summer months among the rough grass, fern, or other kind of herbage that affords concealment and shelter. The male of this bird, during the month of March, will fight furiously should another male come across its path. Last

year I saw a brace of these birds engaged in a combat, and it was remarkable to see the quickness of action, with the certainty of blow. The feathers flew in the air from almost every stroke. In May the female bird scratches away the dead leaves and weeds until she has made a shallow hole large enough for herself, where she lays from eight to fourteen eggs; but the situation of it is mostly known to the game-keeper of the district, although the eggs are covered over with withered leaves when left by the hen bird; but the Pheasant uses runs, and when compelled by hunger to quit her nest, she goes along the same line of ground. This track, when seen by the keeper, induces him to follow it and see if the eggs that are there are in a safe place, and not likely to be found by poachers: if it be considered safe, they are permitted to remain; but should the nest be in a conspicuous spot, the eggs are taken and placed under a barndoor fowl, and the young are reared by hand until they are old enough to be placed in a cover, and at this season of the year they are called Polts; but should they be allowed to remain, they are most pro-

bably hatched by the parent birds. The chicks run very early, even while part of the shell is on their back. I must not forget to mention that the eggs of the Pheasant are of great value when taken in the early part of the breeding season, and poachers know where to find, and receive several shillings for a nest of freshly-laid eggs.

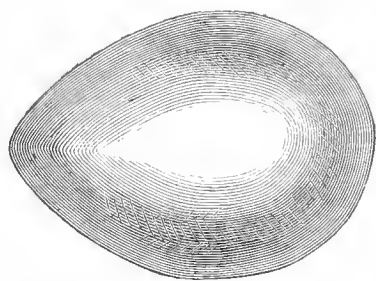
The chicks of these birds feed on small seeds and insects, especially ants and their eggs. This diet is mixed with a little green herbage ; but when the time of harvest comes, they partake freely of corn, peas, beans, wheat, and barley ; and when the month of October is fast drawing near to its close, the acorns begin to drop, and supply good fattening nourishment for our king birds of sport.

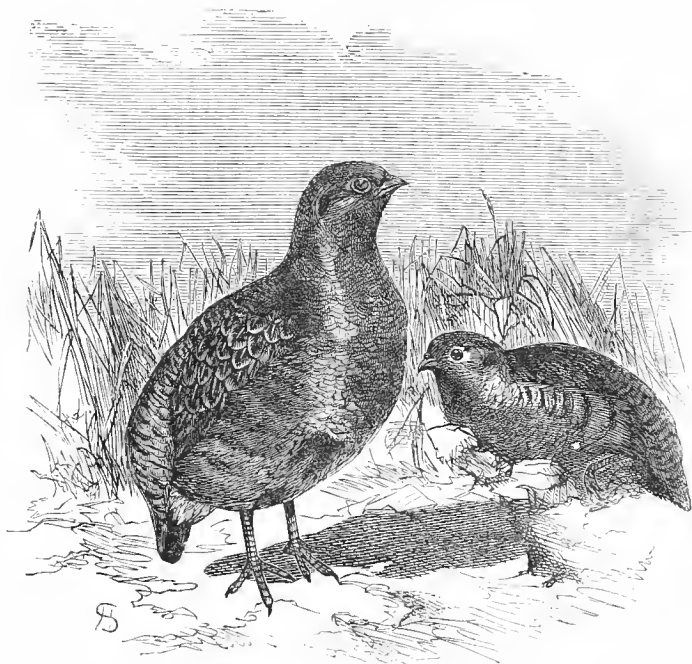
Should a cover that is thickly preserved be near a wood that is not so well kept, with a slip of buckwheat growing near, and the keeper feeds with that grain mixed with white peas inside the cover, it will be sure to afford sport derived from the opposite wood. This is often done by gamekeepers who wish to show their employers a good day's shooting without any

very great expense. When shooting through a cover too high for sportsmen to walk, they stand in a riding on the side next to the quarter of the wood that is being beaten, and where it is only a shot at a Pheasant now and then, the beaters' cry when flushing a cock Pheasant is, "Cock over." This gives full energy to each gun, and every eye is looking to see which line it is taking, in order to be prepared for a more certain shot.

In the winter, when trees are stripped of their foliage and the herbage beneath is cut down by frost, the Pheasant passes its night on low boughs of trees: it prefers, as a rule, larch to any other. The male bird makes a great noise when going to perch, and by that sign his roosting-place is often marked by some poacher who is on the look-out for one or two certain trees to which he may come direct in the middle of the night, and, if not caught by the watchers, bags his prize and makes his way out of the wood in a very cautious manner. And should this bird ever lose the protection of the Game Laws, it will most probably only be found in the aviaries of our country.

On the first of October this bird may be lawfully killed by any one holding a right of shooting over land, and who has at the same time a certificate to kill game ; therefore, turnip-fields near woods are often allowed to remain quiet until that time, when both Pheasants and partridges afford a good variety of sport, and when served up at our second course after a fatiguing day, may be considered not the worst part of a day's diversion.





THE COMMON PARTRIDGE.

(*Perdix cinerea.*)

THE forehead and throat is of a rust-red colour; the neck, breast, and sides are grey, with very fine zigzag lines of black; the sides are barred with chestnut brown; in the middle of the breast is a patch of deep chesnut-colour in the form of a horse-shoe; the upper parts are ash-brown, barred and speckled with

black and reddish-brown ; the two middle feathers of the tail match the back, the others are rust-red. The female has no horse-shoe on the breast, and the rust-colour round the beak is less red. Length, thirteen inches. Eggs olive brown.

The most striking part of the male bird's plumage is the horse-shoe, as that beautiful patch of dark brown on the breast is called ; the general appearance of the upper feathers at a distance resembles the colour of the ground, and when crouching among dead leaves, it is not easily detected.

Partridges pair early in spring, although the female does not make her nest till May, and at that time of the year these birds may be heard calling, when the sun has sunk from our view ; at such seasons they are very pugnacious, and the coveys break up into pairs. The nest of this bird is only a few dried leaves or pieces of straw placed in a shallow hole, which it has recently scratched, where it deposits its eggs, the number of which vary from twelve to eighteen ; hay, clover, and corn-fields are very favourite places for its nest, as also open cultivated ground. Here, when

mowers are doing their work, they often come across a Partridge's nest, and it is not a rare occurrence for the hen bird to meet with her death by the scythe, for her attachment towards her nest is very great ; but if disturbed by the mowers, so that she forsakes her nest, the keeper puts the eggs under a common hen to be hatched : she will then lay again, but not more than seven or eight eggs, but these birds in September will be very small, and they are called Squeakers by sportsmen. Should a dog come across a young brood, the male bird flutters along the ground, uttering at the same time a peculiar cry of distress, throwing himself directly in the way of danger, for the purpose of deceiving the enemy. These actions are very striking : the hanging of its wings, its screams and general appearance would give any one unacquainted with its tricks the idea of a wounded bird, whereby the dog is deceived by its too eager expectation, and is drawn by it some distance in an opposite direction from the young covey. When the dog has been lured far enough to secure safety, suddenly the actor's wings become perfectly right, and he flies off,

leaving his pursuer in the lurch. Partridges are mostly found in temperate climates, as extreme heat or cold is alike unsuitable for them. If it is a bad season, sportsmen treat these birds sparingly, but, on the contrary, if a good one, they fall freely by the gun. Notwithstanding this, however, it is said that Partridges are on the increase, as many waste lands are daily brought into a state of cultivation.

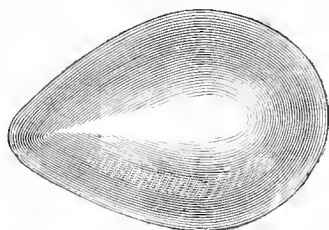
While the female Partridge is performing the duty of incubation, the male remains near, and should he see danger of hawk, cat, weasel, or other kind, he immediately gives the alarm. When the young run, which they do directly they are hatched, he accompanies them, and takes a part in teaching them to shift for themselves, although they remain together until the following spring, if not destroyed.

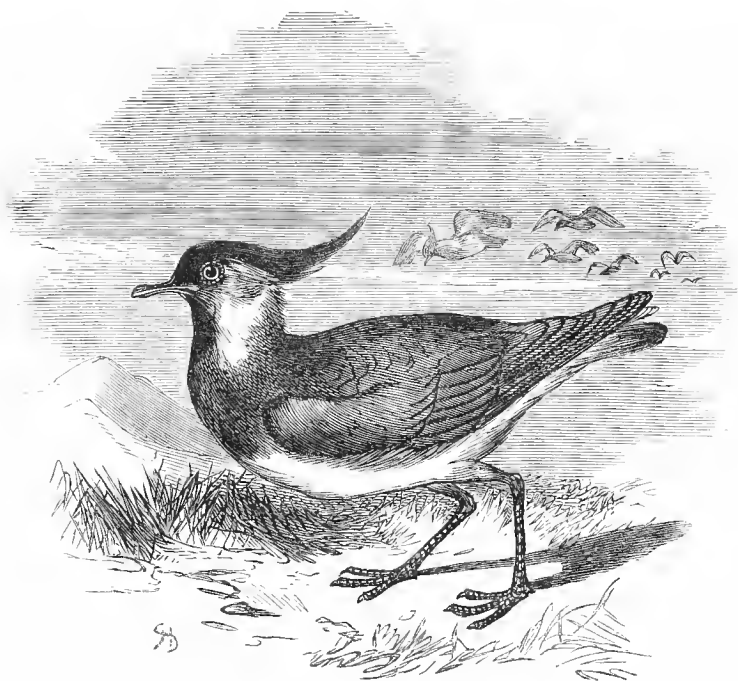
The young, like those of the pheasant, feed on insects and ants' eggs, but when harvest is ready they partake of corn, and when September comes in, the sportsman does not fail to try fields of stubble, especially those that are reaped. When this was more the custom than it is now, and turnips were sown

broadcast, they could be walked up to easier than at the present system of farming, as in dry seasons the birds can see the sportsman from one end of the field to the other up the rows of turnips or mangold wurzel; but in past days, or a century ago, shooting, like other things, was not so well known as now, and, instead of the gun, hawks were used for killing game on the wing. At the present time, when Partridges get too wild for sportsmen to approach near them on the ground, the method of driving is adopted, and it requires a good shot to fall his brace when these birds are in full flight in the month of December. Partridges always roost on the ground, the covey forming a circle, with their heads outwards, so that an enemy cannot well surprise them.

The character of this bird's flight is a straight line, moving its wings very rapidly when rising from the ground, thereby making a sudden whirring noise, familiar to those who have crossed fields of corn; but after it is in full flight, it can turn any way it may please with only a slight curve of its wings, which at times seem not to have a feather moving. These

flights do not generally extend to any great distance, unless frightened by some one firing under them at the latter part of the shooting season, when they may sometimes be watched until lost to view.





THE LAPWING OR PEEWIT

(*Vanellus cristatus.*)

THE top of the head is black, glossed with green ; a tuft of long and narrow feathers proceeds from the back of its head ; the sides of the head and neck are white ; the throat and breast are a deep black ; under plumage is white ; back and wing-coverts blackish-green, with purple reflections ; tail white at the base,

the end black ; legs reddish. Length, twelve inches. Eggs olive-brown, blotched and spotted with greenish-brown mixed with black.

This heavy-flying bird may be known in several different ways. When on the wing it is easily detected, for the wings, when spread open, put one in mind of the barn owl, so singularly long and round are they in comparison to the body. When taking a flight with others of its kind to some distant part, it appears to fan the air in slow movements, but in the spring, when disturbed from the ground, it is wonderfully quick and active, and doubles about with surprising agility : it is said the number of doubles it makes when started from its nest denotes the number of eggs the nest contains ; this, however, I cannot quite understand, and consider it an idle tale. Many country people search for their eggs, and receive a high price for each, as they are very rich and thought a delicacy. These birds are found in most parts of Europe. The name, if sounded in a high, squeaking voice, resembles their note.

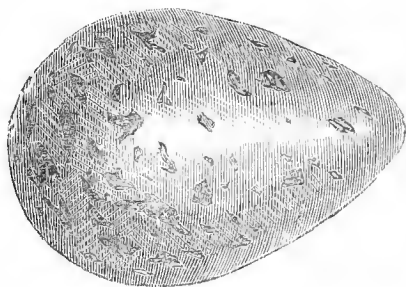
They frequent marshy places, heavy ground, borders of lakes, and large tracts of grass land near water.

When feeding they are constantly on the run, dodging here and there, taking a peck, and off again.

This bird is common in every part of England, and is partially migratory. Those bred in the north are more punctual in their time of migration than those bred in the south. In Britain their roving is uncertain, being often made for more sheltered places, and where they can have a better supply of food, which consists of worms, slugs, and insects. In November they are very fat and good eating: at this time of the year they are very wary, and can only be surprised now and then by the fowler: misty days are considered the best to get a few bagged by sportsmen.

The Peewit or Lapwing, in the month of April or May, deposits her eggs on a few pieces of dried weeds, placed in a hollow of the ground, where she lays four in number. The young can run as soon as they are hatched, and follow the parents in a quick manner when only a day old. It is some little time before they acquire the use of their wings; but, when able to do so, they form into flocks, and are generally seen some distance from a hedge or other place that might

form a hiding-place for their enemy, man. It may be worthy of note here that in the breeding season this bird raises a peculiar cry, indicative of its strong sensitive nature and affection for its offspring, and which may be heard at some distance. Should the traveller or trespasser approach too near the young of this bird, it will fly very near him, uttering its shrill call, as if in distress, and warning him to quit such sacred ground.



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